

Beleaguered

A Story Of The Uplands Of Baden In
The Seventeenth Century



HERMAN THEODORE KOERNER

Beleaguered

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With an upward look, he saluted the Most High, and threw the blade at
(Frontispiece.) the feet of the astonished King. (Page 10.)

BELEAGUERED

STORY OF THE UPLANDS OF BADEN
IN THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

*To David Stair Jordan, Esq.
with the compliments of the author*

H. T. Koerner
BY *Grand Island*

HERMAN T. KOERNER

N.Y.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY THE AUTHOR

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TO MY FRIEND
JOHN LUND,
THIS VOLUME IS AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED.

HERMAN T. KOERNER.

BUFFALO, N.Y.

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"A camp and a *beleaguer'd* town."

WORDSWORTH.

White Doe of Rylstone.

BELEAGUERED.

CHAPTER I.

VILLINGEN.

SOMEWHAT more than two and a half centuries ago, the people of Germany were in the midst of a fearful reign of bitter hatred, violence, and destruction. The Thirty Years' War left its indelible mark throughout the entire land. There was furious insistence on the forms of religious worship and the most dreadful atrocities were resorted to in the name of religion. All social life was affected. Father was estranged from son, brother from brother, families were torn apart, and the dwellers in communities, towns, and cities were arrayed against one another by the relentless schisms and dogmas. Human love and kindness seemed to have fled from the earth. Violence, rapine, fire, and the sword were the instruments resorted to by men to enforce the adoption of their views of religious observance.

With this lamentable condition existing among the German people, it is easily conceivable that Gustavus Adolphus of Sweden and his allies should sweep with uninterrupted success over Northern, then Central, and finally the extreme southern and southwestern portions of Germany.

As the conqueror advanced he cunningly fostered dissensions among the German people and repeated the tactics by means of which the successful campaign against the Pole and the Russian had been carried out. Nor did the invader forget to levy and collect ransom after ransom from the helpless and divided cities, which were again and again subjected to the squeezing process. When the public funds of the recreant cities gave out, the chief authorities, then nobles and their families, were ruthlessly seized and held for ransom. Thus the coffers of the invaders were replenished and merrily the war went on. Adventurers from every country in Europe were naturally attracted by this method of warfare, and the excesses dignified by the name of war were only another name for brigandage on a large scale.

To be a soldier, more particularly an officer, was invariably to be a receiver of stolen goods. Where opposition was found, it was met with murder and mutilation if the victims were men, and captivity and outrage if they were women. Fire and sword, rapine and license, all forms of crime and debauchery, held sway and the poorest peasant as well as the noble felt the victor's heavy hand. Cottage and castle, hamlet and burg were all seized by the soldiery. The fodder and live stock of the peasant were taken and the cottages and buildings burned, while the castle being the prey of the superior officers was despoiled of money, valuables, and everything transportable. If the measures of spoils seemed too small, the women were appropriated, and held either for ransom or most brutally maltreated by the scions of the reformed religion. Invaders had in past centuries crossed and re-crossed the whole region bounded by the Rhine on the west, the Main on the north, the hill regions on the east and the Alps on the south, but never in the history of the stricken country had the excesses reached such a refinement of cruelty as in the first half of the seventeenth century.

The looted peasant, in imitation of his oppressors, promptly

resorted to like means to replenish his depleted savings and stolen chattels and the temporary disappearance of the Swede and his allies was a signal for additional license by the peasant upon those with whom he should have united in the common defence of the Fatherland. Thus, bands of half-maddened, starving beings from the lowest walks of life, scoured through the few regions untouched by the foreign oppressor and visited frightful cruelties upon the hapless inhabitants. Vagabondage, murder, and robbery were the order of the day to such an extent that no one dared to undertake a journey, however short, without a strong body-guard for self-defence. Travel by night was simply out of the question, for even the German soldiers of the allied cities, when not under the eyes of their superior officers, fell upon any hapless caravan or cavalcade for the purpose of robbery.

Thus the defender of his Fatherland of the day became the robber of his neighbor at night, and the beautiful and fertile uplands of Bavaria, Würtemberg, and the pine-clad hills of Southern Baden became a theatre of war in the heart of a Christain nation, like in character and inferior in degree only to the fierce and brutal conflicts of the Russian and the Cossack. The inhabitants of the whole plateau, from which the Rhine and the Danube descend, to their opposite water-sheds, seemed destined to be blotted out of existence and the whole area made uninhabitable for civilized man.

Throughout all the period of this horrible suffering and destruction, the little fortified city of Villingen, high up on the plateau, in the foot hills of the Black Forest, defied the single and combined efforts of the invaders. Impervious to the blandishments or the threats of her enemies, defiant and alert to the foreign and domestic foes that swarmed everywhere about her, the fortress stood intact and the city remained true to her heritage, her history, and her God. Stern, calm, and confident in her might, she placed her reliance in her strategic position and the strength of her

walls, but above all in her God-fearing, sturdy, and valorous defenders. The horrors of war were about her everywhere. Now to the north, amid the silent and awe-inspiring pine forests, now to the south, toward Lake Constance and the distant Alps. Again toward the rising sun, the land of her half-hearted countrymen in Suabia, and again to the west, across the spurs of the forest descending toward the valley of the Rhine.

Beautiful she stood in her commanding position, with her lofty towers and battlements, from whose feet the undulating plains and fertile valleys stretched far to the east and south. Strong in her turreted walls and deep moats, indeed, almost impregnable as against the forces at the command of man at this period. Reliant in the valor of her sturdy defenders, whose proud boast of "No surrender" was successfully maintained in many a long-drawn-out siege during the more than five hundred years of her history.

Safe, in the never failing supply of pure fresh water of the Brigach, whose purling springs bubble out from a naturally formed filter of gravel, a few leagues from the walls of the city to the northeast. Safe, in the over-flowing granaries, which the bitterly learned lessons of former generations had led her valiant defenders to provide, and safe also, in the hundreds of domestic cattle and large quantities of provender which were carefully sheltered and stored in the common-wealth barns throughout the city.

Thus securely harbored, her seven thousand inhabitants remained contentedly housed within her walls, and not only extended hospitality to the unfortunate few who escaped alive from the horrors which devastated the whole region about Villingen, but rallied a determined force of upward of twelve hundred men, mounted knights, with lance and sabre, the flower of the noble families of the highlands, pikemen and musketeers from among the burghers and the peasants, the guilds and the crafts, and a goodly number of artillerymen who were trained to the service of the one hundred car-

Gerold von Ebertus

Member of the

Villingen

Villingen.

(had been humiliated at court)

5 + resigned

has committed

ronades, mortars, and heavier guns mounted on the double walls of the city.

Thus in the late autumn, when the invaders from the north and west had defeated the combined but weak efforts of the South German nobles, and scattered the forces opposed to them to the four winds of heaven, spreading destruction and death broadcast, a noble, Gerold von Ebertus, was called to assume command of the forces of Villingen within the walls, and to attempt to bar the farther advance of the enemy in the district embracing many leagues of territory subsidiary to it.

Gerold was a magnificent example of combined energy, determination, and action. Having suffered humiliation at the Court of Austria, in his thirty-fifth year he resigned his military commission and determined to devote his life to theological pursuits and the development of his estates, which consisted of many hundreds of fine acres of grain lands and forests.

For nearly four years he persevered in his self-imposed task. He had gained the confidence and admiration of the prior and superiors of the Franciscan monks and all the men of letters in the neighborhood, with whom he mingled during the long winters when the exactions of his estates allowed him full liberty to devote to his studies. He was a reticent yet kindly man, proud to a degree, always careful of his personal appearance, and in his manner of addressing those with whom he came in contact, but especially proud when in the company of his equals. The humiliations to which he had been subjected hardened him towards the nobles of the neighboring fortress of Rothweil, who not only vented their bitter hatred upon him, but harbored his out-cast wife Lucretia. Gerold was not a man to forget those who caused the destruction of his home, his bitterness of heart, or the sudden termination of what promised to be a most brilliant military career. Werner von Klutus, uncle of Lucretia and prefect of Rothweil, a cunning, sordid, and

neighborhood
ROTHWEIL

Maximilian

He was

Werner von Klutus

uncle

treacherous man, entrenched himself by misappropriations of public funds and supplies generously advanced by the House of Austria. Immeasurably inferior to Gerold in knowledge, courtliness, and courage, envious of the magnificence of his house, his retinues, his lands, and his wealth, Klutus and his confederates, among whom was his niece Lucretia, most actively conspired for the purpose of humiliating and degrading him. Nor had they much difficulty in finding a suitable plan of attack. The superior education of Gerold was far-famed, and this fact, when coupled with his reputation for lavish hospitality, brought to his house many travellers who ventured through the region during the years of truce and comparative peace which preceded the opening of this story.

Gerold accused of harboring a spy
Transferred from Villingen to Lorch
along Turks' territory

CHAPTER II.

GEROLD VON EBERTUS.

GEROLD was accused by the nobles of the adjoining city of Rothweil, of harboring within his walls a spy from the arch-enemy of his countrymen, in the person of the philosopher Coron, of France. It mattered little to his accusers or the superiors at the Court of Vienna that the philosopher was received with every manifestation of friendliness and respect by the Franciscan prior, Breno, and monks in Villingen, or that Gerold plainly demonstrated the purely intellectual significance of the visit ; it was sufficient for the suspicious and narrow-minded judges that a heretic and a Frenchman had visited the important stronghold of Villingen and found not only entrance in a time of truce, but hospitality under the roof of one of its chief nobles.

Gerold was summarily transferred, by the findings of the court, without recourse, to a command on the outlying districts bordering upon the land of the Turk and a fine of several thousand florins was imposed, the latter portion of the penalty, however, being subject to the approval of the Crown.

Listening to his sentence, Gerold was overcome by the excess of his feelings. His memory ran back over the sad and bitter events of his domestic life which robbed him not only of home and happiness but tore from his heart his only child, a son for whom he had planned a brilliant future and

in whom he hoped to find a worthy successor to the honors of his ancient family. Memories came also of fifteen of the best years of his life which he had devoted freely to the service of his country in fighting under its banners.

Not only on the wide plains of the Volga and the Don, and in the mountain fastnesses of the Carpathians, but in the bitter winters of the extreme north and under the torrid heat of the plains of Lombardy, full oft he had met and vanquished foreign foes, but as well he had taken arms for the support of the Crown against the furious uprisings of his own misguided countrymen, and always with an entire singleness of devotion to duty and honor. And now when the unjust wearer of the Crown sought to degrade him without the slightest cause, it was scarcely a subject for wonder that the proud nature of the man succumbed to partial despair.

Bitterly Gerold inveighed against his accusers. In vain he pleaded with masterly logic and eloquence, dissecting thread by thread the web his enemies had so skilfully woven around him, and demonstrating most clearly the baselessness of the charges which the conspirators had purposely invented to accomplish his downfall. The whole tremendous force of the man was not brought into play, however, until the generous prior, Breno, the superior of the Franciscan monastery, who accompanied Gerold on his journey to Vienna, stated the true reasons of the bitter hatred that inspired the charges and explained in detail the shameful story of Lucretia, the niece of Werner von Klutus, and the ascendancy of Gerold's former wife over the whole cabal of conspirators.

Breno failed to shake the evidence or temper the hostility which had so suddenly found expression against Gerold. Then in the full knowledge of the righteousness of his position and in the firm belief that his sovereign would prevent so unjust a sentence being inflicted upon an innocent man, he demanded the privilege of a noble to plead his cause in an appeal to the highest authority in the realm. To his infinite surprise and humiliation, he was admitted to the

King Ferdinand of Austria
(Gerold's sovereign)

Gerold's appeal to Ferdinand but failed

from resigning

Gerold Von Ebertus. 1899

August presence of his sovereign only after a delay of many days—days that were full of agony and bitterness—days in which despair and heartrending suspense threatened to overwhelm him.

Ferdinand of Austria, surrounded by a small retinue of courtiers and officers, among whom was the chief officer of the Court, finally received him. The cold manner of his reception, and the covert sneers of those assembled about the King, sufficiently explained to Gerold the delays he had been subjected to, in securing a hearing. The King, after calmly and contemptuously admonishing his subject upon the unusual course he had chosen to take in appealing to him, said that he would hear Gerold only on the ground of and in accordance with treaty rights of his vassalage, and would allow him the few moments that intervened between the time of his duties and a minor social function, to which the Court was about to depart, to make his statement.

Gerold stood with proud mien and great composure before his sovereign, but in his heart he knew that the effort he was about to make had already been prejudiced and would fail. He summoned all the dignity of his nature to his aid and with increasing eloquence, defended his character and his honor. The sneers of those assembled were changed to expressions of surprise as the power of the man manifested itself, and the perfunctory manner of the King vanished with his rising anger. When Gerold finished his masterly protest against injustice and degradation with haughty bearing and flashing eyes, every face was turned towards him, either in respect or admiration.

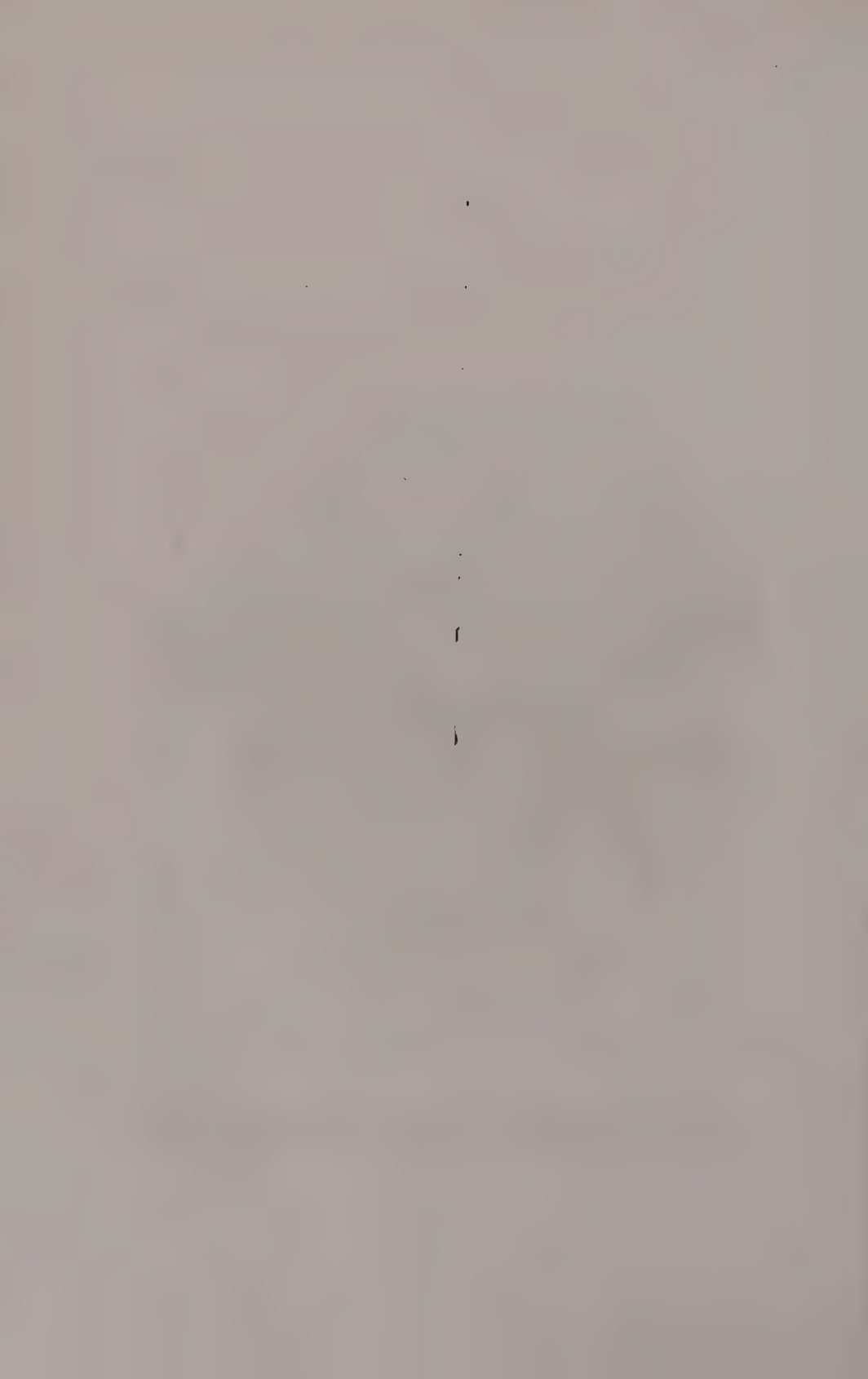
Gerold folded his arms and looked at them calmly, while Ferdinand conferred with the chief officer of the Court, or procurator. At a sign the King stood up and read the accusation. Gerold dropped upon one knee and received the decision. It was that the fine which he had been ordered to pay would be waived, but that the other findings of the court were approved without comment.

He heard the decision and the fiery heart of the warrior overleaped all bounds, either of prudence or judgment. He straightened himself and quickly drew his sword. With an upward look, he saluted the Most High and threw the blade at the feet of the astonished King, about whom the courtiers and officers had gathered. Gerold also drew from his neck the insignia of office and tossed it likewise at the feet of the King, thus indicating without a word his withdrawal from the service and the abandoning of the order to which he belonged.

Ferdinand recovered his composure but not without an effort and with a menacing look at the audacious man, turned his full figure towards him. He sternly reminded him of his duty to observe the decorum of the Court, and of the implied indignity which he had perhaps unintentionally heaped upon his sovereign and cautioned him to consider well the consequences of his hasty decision in withdrawing his services at a time when every man was needed to defend the country from the threatened invasion of the Swede.

Gerold listened with closed eyes and folded arms. His face was ghastly pale but he stood firmly erect. He replied that his decision was irrevocable, that he would return to his estates and live as a retired nobleman. He thanked his Majesty for the attention he had received and apologized humbly for any infraction of Court decorum. His feelings overwhelmed him before he had finished, and with bowed head he slowly left the room. Breno, the monk, received him in the anteroom, and, from the quick look he gave Gerold, knew what the decision was. Breno tenderly took his arm and led him back to their lodgings. After a weary journey, they again reached Villingen, where after some months of retirement, Gerold recovered from the terrible shock and disappointment, sufficiently to give attention to his estates and pursue the studies in which he delighted. After a beautiful summer and an abundant harvest came a winter of unusual severity, and then again came the spring with its flowers and its promise of future harvest.

The following year was not without constant war alarms, but again the spring came and Gerold, calm, courteous, and silent to most men, pursued the even course he had mapped out for himself. So four years passed with varying fortunes, replete with alarms, truces, and attacks, until the opening of the year 1633, when the theatre of war suddenly advanced into the very heart of Southwestern Germany.



nelled. Each exit therefrom was provided with a stout, heavy, wrought-iron gate, through which entrance was had into the various streets of the fortress. This immense and enduring oval of masonry formed the inner and principal wall of the city and was surmounted with numerous heavy guns.

Now, after its five hundred years of exposure to the winds, rains and frosts, and the fierce assaults of many a besieging army, it stood back frowning, seeming to have gathered added strength from its battles with the elements, and the onslaughts of its human foes. A deep and wide moat, nearly fifty feet across, filled with clear water, ran along the entire base of the wall.

At the Franciscan gate and tower above which floated the royal standard, was the only drawbridge in use by the garrison and inhabitants at this particular time. The south, east, and west bridges were drawn closely into the shielding recesses of masonry especially built for them. Over the Franciscan bridge, the paths led to the outer wall which paralleled the oval of the interior wall. Beyond the outer wall was a wide moat extending around the entire outside oval. This wall, also built of solid masonry, was lower and narrower than the principal line of defense, and on its ramparts were mounted all the lighter guns or carronades.

A subordinate tower ranged over the outer gateway and embrasures, and a drawbridge of like construction to that before described spanned to the city. The large commonwealth granaries and storehouses, the barns filled with live stock, a powder mill and two flour mills, together with numerous outbuildings and quarters for cavalry, and no inconsiderable ground for cultivating garden truck, filled the entire space between the outer wall and the inner moat. The swift-flowing Brigach furnished ample power for operating the mills as well as serving water for the two deep moats.

The gray mists which hovered over the depressions of the east and south began to rise under the ardent glances of the

Main

7 walls

7 moat

2
1

1. A. F. ...

golden autumn sun and, as they took their upward flight, gently kissed the high towers and steeples of the Minster. Lazily the standard flapped against the staff and slowly the smoke from the chimneys moved away in even strata toward the east. In the north the dark pines of the Black Forest cast their lengthened shadows over the undulating country, rising hill upon hill upward into the clear blue sky beyond. In the rolling uplands of the west, the mists were still hovering and partially obscured the panorama of hill and forest. Like a silvery snake, the swift and bright stream, the Brigach, rushed toward the little city bringing a never-failing supply of clear, cold water to its inhabitants. After passing completely around the fortress, it wends its way across fields into the hollows of the east, where a few leagues below, it meets and joins its rival, the Breg. Thus united, fondling each other, rushing over field and meadow and tumbling through rocky cut and forest, they run to form the head waters of the Danube which flows uninterruptedly toward the rising sun and onward to the capital city of the empire.

An officer stood on the rampart of the outer wall close to the subordinate tower of St. Francis. At his side were a couple of subalterns who ever and anon made signals to the drawbridge keepers and guard below. Something of more than ordinary importance was keeping the little group alert, as they vainly tried to pierce the intervening mists to the north and east. "They seem to come not, Lumbas," said the elder of the two soldiers; "and they should have been here hours ago."

The officer did not answer the half-interrogatory, but looked intently in a slightly different direction. The eyes of his two companions involuntarily followed his gaze and an exclamation burst forth from the younger man.

"There they are!" he exclaimed, pointing his finger in the direction towards which all were looking.

The officer strained his sight to pierce the distance but failed to satisfy himself.

"You, Robertus, have sharp eyes, and younger than mine, tell me what you see and quickly," said Lumbas.

"A small body of horsemen, five or six in number, apparently. Do you not see the slight glimmer of their arms and mail as they now ascend the gentle rise toward Rothweil?"

"I surely see something, but my eyes are not too reliable at such a distance. Keep your eyes on them without fail, and tell me as they advance how they are mounted."

The younger soldier kept his glance on the little group, now losing them behind some intervening rise or clump of trees, and again pointing to them with renewed interest as they gradually approached an open space, where the background relieved them, and the rising sun cleared the morning air.

"There now! Do you see them?" asked he, as he bent nearer to the officer and extended his finger.

"Yes, I can see them," said the other soldier, who pressed his palm to the edge of his helmet.

"Then signal the officer of the guard below," said Lumbas, "and tell him to be alert for further instructions."

Lumbas looked intently into the distance and once or twice thought he could discern a small moving speck on the landscape. The young soldier seemed to gather excitement as the troop advanced and strained his eyes to make out any distinguishing marks that would establish the identity of the approaching cavalcade. After several minutes of intense peering, the officer looked away and at Robertus.

"What do you see now?" he asked.

"It seems to me that some one is riding ahead on a white charger and back of him is another with a bright red flag on his lance."

"If it is so, it is Carolus! Thank God! and the uncertainty is over," said Lumbas.

"Inform the officer below, that a small body of riders is approaching the Franciscan gate, and from appearances and

the size of the party, it is Carolus von Haisus and his escort. Tell him to have the message instantly sent to Colonel Philip Thanner at headquarters and to signal him from the Franciscan Tower."

The order was quickly transferred and in a few seconds the clatter of horses' hoofs told Lumbas that the order was being taken to the headquarters in the tower. Robertus had meanwhile kept his gaze riveted upon the little body of horsemen, when he suddenly uttered an exclamation and swung quickly to the right. He ran squarely into the officer and nearly threw Lumbas off his feet in the movement.

"They are galloping toward us and the lance upon which the flag flies is pointed to the east, there!"

"Look!" he said, as he grasped the officer's arm. "Look there! as certainly as the saints are above us, there is a larger body of cavalry, several dozens of them, approaching from out of the light of the sun. Carolus has seen this body and is hurrying forward to gain the city before their approach."

"So soon! So soon! The Lord be merciful unto us," quietly said Lumbas, as to himself. Then suddenly rousing himself, he gave quick command as he looked in the direction of the first troop.

"Carolus Haisus returns! let him quickly enter. Sound the alarm! To arms!"

"Robertus, quick, the signal gun! Three shots."

Turning to the other soldier, he said:

"Hasten to the officer below and inform him quickly, that Carolus Haisus is approaching and that instantly on his entrance the drawbridge should be raised, the gates lowered, and his men formed for assault. Let him send a courier to Colonel Philip and acquaint him with the fact, that in addition to Carolus a large troop of horsemen is approaching from the east."

He then went back to his post and looked in the direction of the sun, and then again toward the little troop which was

now plainly visible in the distance, rapidly moving at a swinging gallop towards the road leading to the outer drawbridge.

"Too bad! Too bad, that my counsel is not taken for what it is worth," he said moodily. "For, instead of risking the life of one of his best men in reconnoitering, the commander should long ago have learned the lessons of more advanced warfare; lessons which even the Cossack dogs have learned in their most crude manner of warfare.

"Here is the temporary commander of the city calmly awaiting the advance of a hostile force which may number hundreds or thousands and he sends his best lieutenant out with a handful of men, instead of starting some of these lazy-bones of young subalterns, each with a troop of a dozen, to reconnoitre.

"But such are the times! A safe nest with good cheer makes a phlegmatic commander and loses not only many a valuable life, but jeopardizes the safety of many a town. Well, we shall see!"

The short sharp report of a carronade cut short his soliloquizing and the distant rumble of the large deep drums was heard across the moat in the city beyond. Another shot, and one more. The sharp commands to the assembling soldiers below rang up in the clear morning air. Meanwhile Robertus and Haudi returned to their posts of duty beside Lumbas and again were looking at Carolus's troop and at the body of strange cavalry which was now plainly discernible under the rising shield of the sun. Carolus was rapidly advancing and was within a few hundred yards of the gate, still keeping the swinging gallop into which he and his troopers had broken several minutes before.

Lumbas's eyes now beamed with joy as he plainly saw that no harm had come to his friend. He stood on a projecting turret and bending over prepared to salute Carolus as he was about to cross the drawbridge. The little cavalcade drew up to the drawbridge, at which was stationed the

Robertus +
Haudi

officer in charge with the keepers and a strong guard of well-armed men. A military salute was given the leader which was promptly acknowledged.

Carolus gave the order to halt and swung himself out of the saddle as a courier rode up and informed him that the commandant was about to cross the inner bridge and would receive his report at the rooms of the outer tower.

Scarcely had Carolus received these instructions when Lumbas rushed up to him, extended both his hands and led the way to the rooms above and adjoining the spot from which he had so anxiously watched for his appearance in the early light of the morning.

"Thank God! my friend, for your safe return. We feared that some accident had befallen you. Nay, do not explain until the commandant arrives; he will be here directly."

"But what of the body of cavalry which so suddenly broke upon our sight to the east a few moments ago?" asked Carolus.

"They have again disappeared, so Robertus says—yon signal on the Franciscan Tower verifies it, or I would not have left my post."

"It is bad, bad!" said Carolus, as to himself, "but I am thankful to be here without a scratch."

"You had an escape, then?" asked Lumbas, forgetful of his injunction to Carolus to defer his explanations until the arrival of the commandant. Carolus did not answer at once, but looked into the eyes of his friend in a most peculiar and pathetic manner.

"Yes, I had an escape," he said hesitatingly.

Lumbas looked at him in an inquiring manner, but said nothing. He gazed at him as if a great truth had forced itself upon him. His look of inquiry changed to one of admiration, for the fine figure and face of Carolus seemed to him of greater beauty and finer proportion than ever before. Well he noted him at this moment. Of more than average height, in a land noted for its magnificently proportioned

men, his calm, mobile features seemed a shade paler than usual. His bright hazel eyes looked from under a white brow of great beauty and strength, while his brown hair fell in irregular curls upon his polished steel collar. The head, face, and figure denoted calm determination, great strength, and suppleness. Kindness and honor was written in every lineament, and his soft brown eyes expressed a singularly pathetic and sad emotion. Clad in the slashed leather coat and shoulder pieces and high, artistically folded riding boots, to which were attached long, sharp spurs, he presented a picturesque figure as he stood beside Lumbas, leaning on his long, heavy sword and covered with dust and splashes of mud.

Lumbas was interrupted in his contemplation of Carolus by the sound of many footsteps, the clanging of arms and the jingle of spurs.

CHAPTER IV.

CAROLUS'S NARRATIVE.

THE temporary commandant of the fortress, Colonel Philip Thanner, and his staff had arrived at the outer tower. With a glance at the signal on the Franciscan Tower, to assure himself of the state of affairs, he walked rapidly toward Carolus and Lumbas, who saluted as he approached. Saluting in turn, Colonel Philip extended his hand and cordially grasped that of the officer.

"We give thanks for your safe return, Carolus, and you came none too soon, judging from the sudden approach of the enemy. Let us enter the room here and I will hear your report. You, Lumbas and Robertus, together with Rheinhold and Haller, may accompany me."

They all entered and took seats except Carolus, who still resting on his sword, looked slowly at the eager and intensely interested little group of officers. He brushed his curling brown hair back with his hand and tossed his head in a quick manner, from right to left, which always indicated suppressed excitement with him. He then slowly reached down and took from the table a beaker and filled it with wine from a large pitcher, drank it and in a clear round voice, gave his report.

"Herr Commandant and officers, you remember that when it was decided that a small, well-armed party should be sent out to Rothweil to carry and receive dispatches bearing on the movements of our enemies, but primarily to bring

to our city the expected commisssion from our most august sovereign at Vienna, for our illustrious townsman, Gerold von Ebertus, it was supposed that that fortress was in the hands of his Majesty's soldiers. It was not !”

An exclamation of surprise and dismay broke forth from every man in the room, and their eager, pained faces were fixed upon Carolus.

“ The hated Swede, with his allies, captured it two days ago, and it is now in his hands.” Carolus raised his voice and clenched his hands.

“ Not fairly won, but treacherously given into the hands of the base heretics.”

A cry of surprise, rage, and resentment answered this startling announcement. With compressed lips and flaming eyes, Lumbas and Rheinhold sprang from their chairs. Robertus remained in his seat deathly pale, while Haller seemed stupefied and dazed ; then Lumbas and Rheinhold, almost in unison, cried—“ Who has done this ?” “ Who is the traitor ? ”

“ Control yourselves,” said the commandant, scarcely less overwhelmed by the news. “ Let us hear the report with calmness. Proceed, Carolus.”

“ As I left the city last night, I took every precaution to avoid surprise and perhaps capture, for you know how thickly infested is every approach to our city with camp-followers, thieves, and vagabonds. We kept well to the north and west, and gained the forest without adventure. We proceeded slowly along the Brigach ravine and over the short cut to the charcoal burners' settlement, reaching it after a painful and hazardous journey, for the path though easily followed for foot folk, is dangerous and difficult for mounted men. The pale light of the moon enabled us to keep the path and eventually to find the little settlement. We rested and refreshed ourselves, as we and our horses were considerably blown from the rough climbing. We again resumed our journey to the north and east from there, riding

well within the deep shadows of the forest and keeping a sharp outlook wherever an opening in the trees occurred. We had passed an open space of more than usual width where the path ascended steeply into a dense portion of the forest, when suddenly and without warning, Eurich, who had just entered the trees, found his horse seized from both sides and a number of dark forms reached for him. Lustily shouting to us he drew his sword in the twinkling of an eye and struck to the right and left. His horse sprang into the air, struck an obstruction and fell, throwing Eurich clear of him. Eurich rolled over, jumped to his feet still grasping his sword and retreated to the opening where we were just entering the dense wood. With drawn swords,—for the lances were of no use and were flung away at once,—we set upon the unknown assailants. We moved rapidly about fifty paces into the wood and in the dim light quickly saw one of them trying in a clumsy manner to mount Eurich's steed. We captured him, leaving one of our party to guard him, and, separating, searched the vicinity for traces of the attacking party. While we could see no one, we heard the cracking of twigs and rustle of leaves which assured us that the rascals had taken flight.

A groan attracted our attention, and there, almost at the feet of Eurich's horse, a dark body lying motionless among the dead leaves testified to Eurich's prowess with the sword. The groan had come from this prostrate man, whose boldness in seizing Eurich's horse had cost him dearly, as his arm was nearly severed from his shoulder. We led both our prisoners into the open and questioned them. They sulkily refused to answer, but Kanne, forcing his sword between the teeth of the uninjured fellow, quickly brought him to his senses. They were charcoal burners who had followed us from the settlement, intent upon robbery. From him we found out the first gruesome news of the fall of Rothweil. Too ignorant to be able to give a detailed or even lucid account, we found out enough to fill us with horror and rage.

We tied the wounded man to a tree and, after securely binding the arms of the other, fastened a lariat around his neck and ordered him in advance of the leading rider. Eurich, who had meanwhile examined his horse, found that it was uninjured. Thus we passed on for several hours, gradually gaining the more level country, where the forest thins out to the east, within a few hundred paces of Peterzell. Emerging from a little wood, we almost stumbled across a prostrate figure lying under a large pine tree. A few paces off, a horse fairly caparisoned was tethered. Kanne jumped off his horse and stooped down to examine what we supposed to be a murdered man. The touch on his shoulder roused the sleeping man, for such he proved to be. He stood up with some difficulty, folded his arms and looked steadily at us.

"Who are you?" I asked, "and what are you doing here?" He looked at me with an air of resignation and with a broken voice said :

"I am Wilhelm von Dougal of Rothweil."

"What are you doing here?" I repeated. He remained silent and dropped his eyes.

"Answer me," I demanded ; "or I will take you back with me to Rothweil."

"Take me anywhere, rather than to that hell-hole of traitors, rascals, and Swedish ravishers !"

The man was transformed with rage as he uttered the last sentence, but I pretended not to understand the singular mixture of epithets which he poured out on the heads of his Majesty's defenders at Rothweil. I therefore sternly cautioned him to beware of the language which he used in speaking of his superiors at a friendly town.

"Friendly town !" he exclaimed, "who are you that you speak of a friendly town ?" I naturally declined to extend the information for which he asked, but he looked sharply at me, and took a step nearer, exclaiming :

"As I live, I believe you are Carolus von Haisus of Vil-

lingen, a valiant defender of his Majesty's crown and a true believer !”

He clasped his hands as if in ecstasy and fell upon both knees with a fervent look to heaven.

“Thank God for this deliverance ! Oh, Carolus, you will never get to Rothweil on the errand you are bent upon, for that wicked city has given itself into the hands of Marshal Horn and his horde of wicked heretics.”

Here was the confirmation of the story which we had forced out of the unwilling vagabonds in the forest. I had hoped against hope that the story might prove false but my hopes were dashed to pieces and a great sorrow overcame me. I looked upon the man and, placing my hand upon his shoulder, told him to rise and commanded him to relate his story. In brief it was as follows :

He was notary of the city of Rothweil, a staunch defender of his burg and a true believer. When the city was opened to the enemy by treachery, he with a number of others, escaped from the captivity to which all believers were subjected and valiantly fought against fearful odds. Driven not only by the foreigners and their cohorts, but by his own heretic townsmen who joined them at the lower precincts of the city, where most of them were mercilessly butchered, he managed to escape on the horse of a Swedish officer whom he fought down. He wandered west, up into the forest near Hornberg and had been without food or rest until he lay down and fell asleep under the pine where we found him.

“Where is this man ?” asked the commandant.

“He is with the troop below.”

“We thought he was a prisoner whom you picked up,” said Lumbas.

“Proceed with the report, Carolus,” commanded Colonel Philip. “We will hear his story afterwards.”

“There is not much more to tell except that we began our return, which I deemed was not only best, but necessary. We met three bodies of cavalry in various places, one

of which we suddenly encountered in an open field to the south of Peterzell. There were about a dozen of them, Swedes with a French officer. They seemed undecided whether to attack us or not. We settled the matter for them.

"Dividing into two groups, Eurich, George, and the notary, who was armed only with a pistol and his sabre, formed the first group; Kanne, Herold, Kappel, and myself, the other. We swung apart and attacked them briskly. Kanne, with his usual impetuosity, soon had a Swede on the ground, having forced his lance quite through him. George followed into the opening and lifted the officer clean out of his saddle. It was nearly the end of George, as two horsemen engaged him right and left at once. The notary saw the danger and, in an instant, brought his sabre squarely down on the collar of one of them, while George had a fierce duel with the other.

"Our group had meanwhile made an opening and the beautiful lance play of Kanne and Kappel separated the entire remaining riders. Madly they wielded about, striking with their rapiers, but they were clearly overmatched by the difference in arms. George was unseated, and again the notary saved his life with unusual dexterity and brilliant passes. In the midst of the tumult, the bugle sounded the retreat. The remaining riders galloped with wonderful precision into the forest path, leaving three dead and two wounded. They were followed by Kanne, Herold, Kappel, and the notary to the edge of the trees, but with George's bugle I called them to halt just in time.

"Eurich received a cut in the arm, and George a thrust that would have ended him, had not his breastplate been of heavy steel; as it was, the shock and the fall that he sustained disabled him for a few hours. The notary also received a cut in his left arm and Kappel's horse broke his leg. We caught one of the horses of the fallen Swedes and took the best arms with us. Our captive charcoal burner who had quietly and

uncomplainingly trotted along at Eurich's side, escaped during the skirmish.

"The other detachments being both quite large, we kept clear of, one indeed not seeing us at all, and the other giving us a lively chase to within three leagues of the neighborhood of Mönchweiler. Two riders who were far in advance of the others, engaged Kanne, Herold, and Kappel, who was mounted on the Swede's horse, and the two riders will never return to their command.

"Kanne despatched one on the first onslaught, breaking his lance, while Herold, after a desperate fight, succeeded in felling his antagonist. Kappel's horse could hardly be managed after the struggle began. He reared and plunged, and seemed determined to throw him, so that it was only after a sharp stroke with the flat of his sword that he managed to quiet him sufficiently to rejoin our troop. We rushed away again at full speed, as the Swedish riders were gaining rapidly and were within a few hundred paces of us. After the skirmish was over, our superior horses told greatly in our favor and we left them rapidly.

"The largest detachment of the enemy which we met was within a league of the city, and the garrison seemed to see it as well, judging from the signals which I noticed flying from the tower. This is my report, Herr Commandant. The notary will undoubtedly give a clear and distinct account of the fall of Rothweil."

CHAPTER V.

AN INCIDENT.

THE little group listened to the narrative with varying feelings and emotions. As Carolus finished his report, they poured congratulations upon him anew. They were all eager to hear the particulars of the fall of the neighboring burg, and impatiently awaited the order to summon the notary Von Dougal. Before doing so, Thanner turned to Lumbas, saying :

“ Bring me what news of the enemy there may be and tell me what signals are flying.”

Lumbas turned moodily from the group and walked out upon the rampart. After a few moments he returned.

“ The retreat signal is flying and nothing has been seen since the detachment was noted to the east.”

“ It is well ! Send for the notary Wilhelm von Dougal of Rothweil, that we may hear from his lips the story of infamous treachery and the fall of our allied neighbor.”

Lumbas, who had been laboring under great excitement for some time, turned suddenly upon the commanding officer with a dark face and flashing eye.

“ Commandant, it little behooves me to oppose your wishes or disturb your plans, but it seems to me, with the enemy hovering about us, three or four detachments having been reported within three leagues and one actually seen from the walls of the city, that it is high time to scout the neighbor-

hood and find out the meaning of this crossing and re-crossing. Carolus has failed to bring the commission from his Majesty to our noble and respected Sir Gerold von Ebertus, who was to take command at his Majesty's wish and special decree. That commission has undoubtedly been intercepted at Rothweil and may have much to do with the sudden and treacherous giving over of the city into the hands of our arch enemies, for we well know the old-time feud that exists between the nobles of that recreant town and our chief. You, therefore, Colonel Thanner, are the responsible head of this fortress and I, as your chief of staff, most emphatically advise and counsel you to take immediate measures to patrol the neighborhood properly, not only to secure such information as may lead to a better understanding of the plans of our enemies, but in the interests of common safety to be properly advised of the approach of hostile troops. I know that my former advice has been unheeded and I have been obliged to conceal the fears I entertained, but the time has come when you must either bestir yourself, or take the heavy chances of negligence of the trust which you hold. I venture to express myself thus publicly and firmly and ask that you send out four reconnoitering parties of not less than two dozen, each with an officer in charge, instructed to report constantly to the city. I ask pardon for my bluntness and apparent interference, but my desire to avoid disaster and confusion must be my excuse."

Lumbas saluted with dignity when he closed his remarkable and affronting appeal. It was a mixture of advice, counsel, imperative demand and covert threat.

Carolus looked at him in surprise, and then at the commandant, who sat for a few moments in his chair, pale and threatening; then slowly stood up and faced Lumbas.

"Since when am I obliged to carry out the wishes of my inferior officers? Who has delegated you to give such commanding advice to your superior officer? Do you repeat but one word of the inexcusable harangue which you try to

dignify into counsel and I will make an example of you and teach inferiors their place. It is time enough to give advice when it is asked for, and counsel when needed."

He sat down and called upon Haller to fill up a beaker of wine. It was clear to all present that a rupture was about to take place.

Carolus turned rapidly on his heel and gently laid his hand on the arm of his friend and whispered :

"Be calm, Lumbas ! Let not your tongue betray you into words that your heart tells you are unsuited to us in our difficulties. Take counsel of me and submit to superior command."

Lumbas had taken a step forward and drawn himself up to his full height. He was about to deliver himself more vigorously and denounce the commandant before his chosen officers, but he looked away from the superior officer into the deep, calm, and sympathetic eyes of his friend and as suddenly relaxed. He therefore remained silent, but from his compressed lips and twitching fingers, the strife that was going on within him was clearly manifest.

The sudden tilt had also aroused Haller and Rheinhold, who naturally sided with the commandant, while Robertus gazed approvingly on Lumbas as he was delivering his attack. The climax of an open rupture was avoided, however, by the entrance of Bakus, who ushered the notary Von Dougal into the room.

Carolus looked relieved and with a glance of appeal to Lumbas, advanced to greet the notary and introduce him to the assembled officers.

Wilhelm von Dougal bowed in a dignified manner to the commandant and the officers, and taking a position in front of Colonel Thanner, he asked, with another low bow :

"Most worthy Commandant, I am here at your request. Of what service can I be to you ?"

"You are the notary Wilhelm von Dougal, of Rothweil ?"

"I am."

"You had charge of the archives and state papers of his Majesty under the prefect Sir Werner Klutus, the virtual commander of your city?"

"Oh, the perfidious wretch! God grant that his duplicity and faithlessness may be fittingly rewarded. I was under his orders, Colonel Thanner."

"Tell us, notary, in your own words what happened during the past week in our former allied and now wretched city. Have no fear of being too severe, for here you are amidst friends and true believers. You have therefore full license to speak your mind."

Dougal pressed his lips together, stroked his wounded left arm in an abstracted way and then passed his hand once or twice across his face, as if to clear his vision of the scenes that evidently oppressed him.

CHAPTER VI.

WILHELM VON DOUGAL'S NARRATIVE.

WILHELM VON DOUGAL was a man of noteworthy personal appearance, and though rather under the size of the men around him, he was of more than average bulk. A fine large head, crowned with abundant, wavy, and slightly gray hair, squarely set on immense broad shoulders, a deep chest and long arms gave him the deceptive appearance of a much taller man. It was the heroic figure of a heavy athlete, yet his quick actions and graceful carriage belied the apparent bulk of his person.

A pair of wonderfully clear, grayish-blue eyes and a well formed nose, gave his rather heavy face a fine, honest, and clear-cut expression. Contrary to the general fashion, his face was cleanly shaven. He was dressed in black velvet with a wide lace collar and white linen shirt which showed through the slashes of the sleeves. He wore a short tight-fitting coat with double rows of black silk buttons, and rather loose knee breeches. A military mantle of black velvet hung loosely over his shoulders.

The only feature of his dress which had a military appearance was the high, artistically folded cavalry boots to which were attached the huge instep flaps and straps which supported the large silver spurs. The light buff of the boots contrasted richly with the black velvet and white collar and slashings. A large soft black hat and two flowing black

plumes completed his dress. The adventures and privations of the past few days had left their marks on the rich habiliments. He had laid his hat on the table and stood before Colonel Thanner and his officers when he began his narrative.

"It is known to you that in my capacity of notary, I was the virtual secretary not only of Rothweil, but a supervisor of the entire district adjoining. I therefore had close knowledge of all that transpired in the interests of the House of Austria. My residence in Rothweil, while nominally in the prefecture and under the roof of the dastardly Werner von Klutus, was in reality in the southern part of the town, close to the south gate, where I lived with my mother."

He stopped for an instant, as if to dispel the fears that seemed to overcome him, but quickly mastered his feelings and continued :

"It is also known to you, that in the prefecture there lived, besides the traitor Klutus, his unhappy and neglected wife Martha, his niece Madame Lucretia, whose history you are probably familiar with, her sister Minerva, an ostensibly devout but cringing, avaricious, and hypocritical spinster who possessed all the bad qualities of Lucretia plus the cunning of Klutus, Amalia, his daughter, a lovely maiden of purest mind and life, and, lastly, Arnoud Heilprin, the lick-spittle commander of the mounted Rothweil knights. I will not weary you with the details of the private affairs of the illy assorted household, and of the cheap snobbishness that pervaded the daily intercourse of its members and the various municipal authorities who were obliged to transact business with the prefect, but let it suffice for my purpose and your information, to state that the wife was treated with brutality and neglect in private, and that the niece, Madame Lucretia, was the real head of the family, who carried on her amours and excesses under the very nose of the prefect, without the slightest opposition on his part.

"Minerva, with saintly eyes and alert ears for everything

Werner von
Klutus
the Prefect

Martha
Minerva
Amalia
Arnoud Heilprin

Martha
Minerva
Amalia
Arnoud Heilprin

the head of
the household

that occurred, took a certain interest in the revelries that were carried on. She was imbued with the spirit of the excesses to such an extent, that with the oft-recurring carousings she strove industriously to neutralize her participations in the wicked circle by increased visits to the church and in feverish attentions to her rosary.

"Amalia was treated with mock respect and condescension by Lucretia, with indifference by Klutus, with hypocritical affection by Minerva, and with amazing arrogance and assumption of proprietary rights by Arnoud Heilprin, whose attentions she had not only spurned with scorn, but had forbidden in the haughtiest manner. Naturally, Martha tried to shield her daughter from the effrontery of Arnoud, and by degrees gradually withdrew both herself and her daughter from the family circle. This but added fuel to flame, for in proportion to the infrequency of opportunities to show his attentions, Arnoud's scarcely concealed brutality asserted itself, when occasion afforded.

Martha &
Amalia

"For years, the evenings were given over to license. In addition to Madame Lucretia and her sister one or two women of high birth and low character always attended them. Of late, the sister of Klutus and aunt of Madame Lucretia took up her residence at the prefecture. This woman, whom no one knew, had lived for years either in Northern Germany, Denmark, or possibly Sweden. It is not known to me in which of these countries she lived last, but it is known that she is a virago of the most pronounced type, and as she is a woman of low character, of no education or refinement, and withal of repelling personal appearance, the rapid ascendancy which she gained over Madame Lucretia, Arnoud, and even Klutus, was the more extraordinary. She soon demonstrated her ability to maintain her share in the scenes which took place in the east wing of the residence.

"Of her coarse, lewd jokes, her high, cracked voice, her lascivious leer, and her filthy stories, when in her cups, the most discreet, trusted, and highly subsidized French servants,

virago?

whom Madame Lucretia attached to herself and her personal household, told in minutest detail in faulty German to the regular household servants of the prefect. This woman, not content with the artificial respectability with which the excesses in Klutus's household had been partly covered up previously, brought, during the truce which existed, the Swedish Colonel Rau, and D'Arville, the French colonel, into the city in disguise and into the house of the prefect.

"At this time, I commenced to divine some ulterior object and one of graver importance than mere license, for the carousing now gave way to consultation. Now of Klutus with the foreigners and again of Klutus with the suspected heretics of Rothweil. Nor did the increased affability of Klutus, Lucretia, and Arnoud, remove my suspicions. To such an extent did I suspect the designs of the evil cabal, that I communicated my fears to my staunch friend, Konrad of Horgen, who not only praised my watchful care, but assured me that my suspicions were justified. He admonished me to note quietly all who participated in the meetings.

"Days and weeks passed, until a fortnight ago, important state papers arrived from Vienna, among which was an appointment to Gerold von Ebertus, chief noble of Villingen, commanding him to assume chief control of his Majesty's fortresses of Villingen and Rothweil, and empowering him to make such transfers of authorities and troops as he deemed expedient and proper.

"A copy was inscribed to Sir Werner von Klutus and the original was taken by the Imperial courier and his guard the next day to your city. The courier had special orders to hasten to Rothweil and deliver his despatches and believing that the despatches to Villingen could as well be delivered the next day, he lodged himself and his men at 'Falcon Inn' for needed rest and refreshment.

"Those despatches were a bombshell in the camp of the conspirators. Messengers immediately left the prefecture and summoned the suspected nobles post haste. For hours

The listeners to Von Dougal's narrative were profoundly agitated as he reached this point and a number of subdued exclamations and expressive looks were passed between Lumbas, Carolus, Robertus, and Haller, while Dougal reached over to the table and drank the remaining wine in the beaker. Colonel Thanner nervously drummed his fingers upon the arm of the chair in which he sat and glanced at Alexander Rheinhold and then at Haller. Having finished the contents of the beaker and again passing his hand across his face, Von Dougal continued :

“ When all had dispersed, I was suddenly summoned by prearranged signal to Konrad von Horgen's house where I found assembled over a dozen of the prominent nobles of Rothweil and vicinity, some arrayed as for travelling, others in the usual dress of the day. Konrad began quietly to give the reason of the meeting, stating that he feared an immediate repetition of the demand for the surrender of Rothweil, which, as you well remember, two months before had been declined with a reference to the superior authorities at Stuttgart and the additional admonition to Rau, com-

mander of the Swedes, 'that as Rothweil had been for two hundred years under the protection of the House of Austria, it purposed so to remain.'

"He feared that inasmuch as Klutus was about to be superseded, he might prevail upon the magistrates and guilds to accede to the demands of the Swede, in order to cover up his vast stealings, and perhaps for a considerable sum to be paid him in addition. He also said that inasmuch as the new appointment of governor was offered to his old-time enemy, the enemy of the precious cabal which had caused the degradation and humiliation of Gerold von Ebertus four years before, Klutus naturally would fear reprisal and a keen investigation of his stewardship.

"Konrad therefore summoned the nobles upon whom he could depend for immediate action. Hugo, Martinez, Ferdinand, and Antonius were quietly to pass out of the gates and reconnoitre outside the city walls, while the others were to send word to their friends and trusty followers to be prepared at a moment's warning to meet at the market-place at a given signal, well armed and mounted.

"Nothing more was done, and this group of loyal men also dispersed quietly and before the city had fairly awakened. At about noon on the eventful day that preceded the fall of the city, a herald announced from the market square that a review of the troops would take place on the Neckar Field, which is outside of the city, as you know. This announcement was hailed with every manifestation of joy by the populace, as it indicated to them not only freedom from danger, which was supposed to menace the city from the fortified camps of Swedes and their French allies in the outlying villages, but a holiday, unlooked for, and therefore all the more agreeable. After the midday meal, they commenced to flock in droves through the gates to witness the spectacle.

"Konrad and his friends who remained in the city heard the announcement with dismay. Ordered either without

knowledge or even suspicion of their designs, or purposely planned to thwart interference with their evident intentions, the parade and the review of the troops compelled their attendance. It mattered little to them now. That treachery was afoot was painfully apparent, and the net cast for the unsuspecting and ignorant burgher, peasant, or tradesman was to gather in its meshes the officer, magistrate, or noble. Hugo, Martinez, and their two companions were safely out of the city, and could be depended upon to fulfil the part they had to do, but what would it avail?

"Konrad and his companions headed the various troops which were under their command and took their appointed places under the Neckar Tower. Arnoud Heilprin, at the head of the Knights of Rothweil, marched out to the field to the fanfare of the bugles. In this detachment, I took my place as chief officer at the last moment. Markus, a heretic, and well known as such, was at the head of the musketeers, while Konrad von Horgen, chief of the pikemen, brought up the rear. The women, children, old men, and non-combatants generally, were looking at the unusual spectacle from the streets and windows, and a goodly number of older burghers stationed themselves on the walls of the city.

"Arnoud Heilprin moved the mounted knights southerly, toward Alstadt, while Markus and his musketeers took the northeastern road toward Neukirch. Konrad with the pikemen and foot folk had orders to move to Neckar Field. Thus the manœuvres continued amid constant marching and counter-marching until nearly five o'clock. Klutus, as chief commander, had summoned Arnoud and Markus, leaving the subordinate officers in command of the troops, which left me in charge of the mounted knights, Clotinus of the musketeers, and Konrad of the pikemen. The populace having their curiosity satisfied, had long ago returned to the city and to their homes.

"I was at Alstadt with the knights, halted until further orders and watching for a courier or messenger prior to be-

ginning the return trip, when suddenly Martinez galloped into the village. He was covered with dust and dirt. Both the rider and his horse were blown, and seemed to have had a hard ride. Martinez discovered me and immediately dismounted. From his actions and appearance and the fact that he sought me at Alstadt, I was convinced that something important was about to take place. He led me quickly away and when out of hearing of others said, with suppressed excitement :

“ ‘ In God’s name, where is Konrad ? ’ ”

“ ‘ Undoubtedly on Neckar Field with his men,’ I answered.

“ ‘ He is not, nor are his men with the musketeers on the Neukirch road. Tell me, have you seen anything unusual during this afternoon and do you not suspect that treachery is at the bottom of this insane review and manœuvring ? ’ ”

“ ‘ We suspected treachery, but what could we do ? Why are you so excited, and why do you ask for Konrad ? Have you bad news ? ’ ”

“ ‘ Yes, a large body of Swedish cavalry is approaching from the west toward Rothweil. I saw them at a considerable distance and hastened to find Konrad. I found him not and was finally directed to Alstadt, nearly distracted from my fears and the loss of precious time. My God ! What are we to do ? ’ ”

“ ‘ The stroke had come, and our worst fears were realized. We were left outside the city to face a superior enemy, while our precious superiors quietly returned to the city full of helpless people, to deliver them and the city to the tender mercies of our foes. Like a flash, the details of the plot revealed themselves to me. The reason for the constant shifting about of the soldiers, particularly of the foot folk, was apparent. To tire them out and make them unfit for fighting, if it should occur, was the explanation. By summoning Arnoud and Markus, the precious rascal, Klutus, prevented any mistakes and by ordering us to await further commands,

also prevented active interference with the consummation of the whole hideous plot.

"I rapidly told my fears and conclusions to Martinez, and asked him what course we had better pursue.

" 'By all means order your riders to Rothweil, with all possible speed, but swing north and east and try to find Konrad to join him,' he said.

"This was what I had already intended to do, and his positive advice decided me. I also decided to keep my information to myself and prevailed upon Martinez to observe complete silence. I therefore ordered the bugles to sound the advance and when well out of the village increased the gait of the troops into a gallop. Thus with Martinez and myself at the head, we crossed the old stone bridge of the Neckar and swung directly to the north and northeast toward Neukirch road. The one hundred and seventy-five men under my command moved in columns of four with regularity and precision. Sullenly, as if possessed by a vague fear, they moved on. The dull thunder of the hoofs, accompanied by the jar of cuirasses, the rattle of sabres, and the jingle of spurs, was the only sound that marred the stillness in the rapidly advancing twilight. As we neared the Neukirch road, I ordered a halt and after a brief consultation with Martinez, decided to bend westward toward Rothweil, at reduced speed, while Martinez and a dozen picked men were to advance and reconnoitre.

"He moved away with his men at full gallop and they were soon lost in the gloom. Two slight rises in the land intervened between ourselves and the league of plain of which Neckar Field was a portion. Slowly we ascended the first gentle slope and were about ready to swing into the narrow defile through which the road leads, when two horsemen approached, riding with breakneck speed. On observing my columns, they halted with sharp abruptness. My command came to a sudden halt, taking up the whole road which at this point narrowed down considerably. I saw, in

the gathering darkness, which the sunken road and the overhanging trees intensified, my friends, Martinez and Hugo. They wheeled about a few lengths ahead, and Martinez said, in a low voice :

“ ‘The blow has fallen ! Rothweil is occupied by the Swedes.’

“ ‘Yes,’ interjected Hugo, ‘I saw Klutus surrender the city and the musketeers, who were completely surrounded just outside of the city walls.’

“ ‘Where is Konrad ?’ I asked.

“ ‘Inside the city, with his pikemen and in possession of the southern gate and bastions. He is fighting against fearful odds, from street to alley, from tower to house.’

“ Suddenly turning to me, in a suppressed voice he asked : ‘Can you depend upon your men ?’ I said, ‘I think so, and they must obey my commands.’

“ I wheeled quickly and in a few words told the knights what had happened. A yell answered my appeal, that echoed through the wood. ‘Lead on ! We follow to the death ! Let us at the hell-hounds !’

“ I waited no longer, and giving the sign to Hugo and Martinez, pointed toward the city.

“ ‘Forward for home and country !’ I cried.

“ Forward we flew out of the ravine, up the second slope and in a few moments we gained the summit.

“ There, scarcely a league before us, was the goal we sought. A few moving lights were seen on the plain and back of them the low red gleam of several fires in the city told in an unmistakable way of the conflict that was raging inside the city gates. We forged onward with accelerated speed until half the distance to the walls was measured. I saw from the increasing light of the conflagration that the south end of the city was the scene of the conflict. I therefore altered our course and led the way over the flat plain, to where the ford of the Neckar allowed a passage.

“ With mingled feelings of rage, hope, and a desire for

vengeance, we rushed across the intervening plain. Higher and higher the flames leaped, and brighter the glare of the burning buildings lit up the carpet of the plain. The Neckar ford was in sight, and we fairly flew to it, into the water and scrambling up the slight rise at the further shore, broke into another mad gallop to the south gate of the city.

"Not a word was uttered. Martinez and Hugo were riding ahead, bent down almost to their horses' manes. The din of conflict could now be distinguished above the pounding hoofs of the horses and the roar of the conflagration could be distinctly heard above the increasing confusion of sounds.

"'Halt! Attention! Draw!' I cried, as we moved up to within about two hundred paces of the south gate. I gave command to Martinez, ordering him to take the lancers to the left wing, while Hugo and myself took command of the steel-clad cuirassiers. Martinez made a slight detour at a rapid gallop. I, at the head of my heavy cavalrymen, started straight for the gate.

"As if out of a cannon, a body of horsemen shot out of the deep shadows of the wall and from behind the low outbuildings and flew into the clear bright light of the plain. Squarely into the opening left by Martinez and his lancers they swung with irresistible force against the two sides of our divided troops.

"'Charge! To the death!' I yelled. A cry of fury answered my words, and we rushed for the long string of horsemen who were still coming from out the shadows of the walls. We struck and broke clear through the lines, slashing to right and left and forcing into a great heap the Swedish horse rushing along at an angle from us.

"'Forward!' the bugle sounded, and again a mass of struggling horse barred our way. The head of the string which issued from the wall was blocking our path and amid frightful disorder and deafening roar, horse and man struck against other horses and riders, overturning and being over-

turned. My heavy men, steel-clad as they were, survived the second shock and with thinning ranks we fell upon the rear of the struggling, moving mass of Swedes that was between us now and Martinez' lancers.

"It was lance to rapier and sabre to sword. Thrust, parry, and cut, amid the hoarse shouts and curses, the hollow ring of stroke upon the steel breastplates, helmets, and cuirasses, the cries of the wounded and the thuds of falling men filled the air with an indescribable din and an awful picture was presented in the fierce and increasing glare of the burning city. We fought with desperation and after a fearful effort broke through this second line. We joined what was left of Martinez' lancers and again faced the whole line of Swedish horse. The string had now been run out of the shadows and formed an immense bow in front of us.

"Martinez was still in the saddle and moved over to me. Hugo was not to be seen. Again the cloud of horsemen advanced upon us, spreading far to the right and left to encircle us. I gave the command to close up, and with lowered lances the brave fellows charged the centre of the advancing bow; my cuirassiers behind and a little to the sides of the wedge-shaped mass of now only about one hundred men.

"Again the Swedish line was broken and melted before our onslaught. Again we wheeled and passed through them when the deluge of men and horses encircled us. Lances were now thrown away and it was sabre to sabre, man to man, but it was a forlorn hope. They were ten to one. Madly we fought, furiously we repelled their overpowering numbers, until we were nearly hemmed in by a heap of falling struggling men and horses which formed a rampart around us.

"The sharp blast of the bugle was suddenly heard above the conflict. In a few seconds the Swedes fell back from that rampart of the dead and dying and an opening was made for an officer, who raised his hand as if for attention,

" 'Surrender, Wilhelm von Dougal, and men of Rothweil,' he said, in a clear, loud voice ; ' it is a forlorn hope you are struggling against. Your city and all the troops except what remains of you are in our possession. We offer you life and fair treatment, but do you submit at once ! '

" ' Never ! ' I cried, ' Colonel Rau,' for it was he.

" ' Charge ! ' and over the heaped-up bodies of horses and men we made our last fierce dash. With Martinez at my side, we rushed into the gap through which the Swedish colonel had precipitately fled, as I gave my command, and the sides closed in upon us and held us as in a vice. With a desperate and despairing effort, we broke through at last.

" A huge fellow, an officer who fought with more than ordinary ability, barred my way, and then the greatest danger of the whole conflict confronted me. Vainly I struck at him, but with wonderful dexterity he parried and fought me. A terrific stroke levelled at me fell short, but landed squarely on my horse's neck. Like a shot he fell under me. I jumped clear of him just in time to escape what would have been my death-stroke. An upward thrust threw the Swede from his horse. I grasped the bridle and vaulted into the saddle with lightning speed. I dug my spurs into the horse and bounded clear of several horsemen who tried to intercept me. Fighting with the strength of despair, I soon cleared the entire line of cavalry, then, clutching my sword and bending low in the saddle, again fled toward the ford of the Neckar, which I reached without interruption, passed, and again galloped up the road to Neukirch.

" I was pursued for a considerable distance, but from my intimate knowledge of the country was able to elude my pursuers. I wandered about the rest of the night and part of the next day, when I finally reached the forest. Torn with grief and anxiety, I rested, and then overwhelmed with the horrors through which I had passed, I fell asleep."

Von Dougal, almost choked with emotion, could scarcely conclude his narrative. His evident distress brought the

sympathetic feelings of his listeners to him. Carolus gently laid one hand on his shoulder and softly took his hand with the other.

“ He, Carolus von Haisus,” concluded Von Dougal, as he inclined his head toward Carolus and pressed his hand, “ staunch defender of the faith and friend of the oppressed, saved me from what would have been certain death had I been captured. I am now here, Colonel Philip, a charge upon you, but willing to assume any burden you may see fit to impose upon me or any service you may choose to assign to me in the common defence of the country and the true faith.”

CHAPTER VII.

COLONEL THANNER TAKES ACTION.

COLONEL THANNER involuntarily rose from his chair and taking a step toward Dougal, extended his hands to him. Sorrow, regret, and sympathy were plainly the feelings which agitated his strong but rather coarse features. He clasped Dougal's right hand and pressed it warmly, saying : " To impose new duties or burdens upon you immediately after the long days and weeks of fear and anxiety which you have passed through would be an ungrateful act for me to perform. I deeply sympathize with you and with all those of your faith who are still at Rothweil and within the grasp of the Swede and his craven allies. When you have rested and recovered from the severe strain to which you have been subjected, no doubt your generous offer to undertake any office or duty which may be assigned to you to perform for the common cause, will be accepted by the authorities of Villingen. There will surely be difficult and dangerous work to do, and the services of all brave and able men within our midst will be in demand."

Turning then to his assembled officers, Colonel Thanner continued : " What the fate of Konrad von Horgen is will not be found out at once, nor can the entire disappearance of his Majesty's courier and his little troop be accounted for by any other explanation than that they have been treacherously waylaid and either killed or taken prisoners. In either

case the state papers are seized. The copies which were intended for the traitor Klutus are also beyond our reach. We have the testimony of our friend, Wilhelm von Dougal, notary of Rothweil, that the expected commission and appointment from his Majesty of Austria to Sir Gerold von Ebertus has been duly received, placing the cities of Villingen and Rothweil, with all their dependencies, in his hands as military governor.

"Although a truce existed which required the invader to observe the three league limit from any fortification, we have heard that it has been ignored and we have seen it violated. A state of war therefore prevails and the truce is over. This district has been without a military governor for upward of four years and the appointment of Gerold von Ebertus is as much in force as if the necessary documents had actually arrived. I therefore propose to you, officers, that at three o'clock this day, we, the chief officers and nobles of Villingen, do delegate ourselves to lay the commission before him.

"I appoint you, Carolus von Haisus, and you, Franciscus Lumbas, bearers of a notification, that at that hour we shall present ourselves at the house of Gerold von Ebertus for the purpose of transferring the commission and installing him in power. I also request Wilhelm von Dougal to accompany you."

Loud shouts of approval greeted these remarks.

"Long live Gerold, defender of the faith!"

"Long live his Majesty of Austria."

Swords were drawn and flashed high in the air. Helmets and hats were waved and the enthusiasm reached a high state. Colonel Thanner finally raised his hand for silence.

"Lumbas, see to it that the pitcher of wine is replenished, and that additional glasses are brought, for it would be unworthy of us not to drink to the health of our friend Wilhelm von Dougal and his coming among us."

Renewed cries of approval greeted this statement and in a

few moments a large tankard filled with wine was brought in by a trooper, followed by an enormous tray filled with beakers, in the hands of another soldier. The wine was poured by Lumbas, and at a sign the troopers retired. The commandant proposed the toast, a long life and continued good fortune to Wilhelm von Dougal in their midst, with the assurance that they welcomed him as a brother.

Von Dougal replied modestly to the kind words addressed to him, and assured Colonel Thanner and his assembled officers that his best services were at their command. He would faithfully perform any duty to which he might be assigned. His life would be devoted not only to the punishment of their common foe, but to the vindication of their God, their faith, and their homes.

The words of Dougal carried strong conviction with them. The earnest, yet powerful personality of this man seemed to fire the hearts of all with whom he came in contact. His vivid narrative was still fresh in the minds of those assembled, and the emotions it awakened stirred their hearts to the depths. The honest and susceptible natures of those loyal men were deeply touched by the story of treachery and corruption of their countrymen at Rothweil. Indeed it was a question at that moment, whether for former friend or the common foe, the greatest execration and hate, coupled with vows of vengeance, were felt.

The commandant proposed the health of his Majesty, Ferdinand of Austria, whose unremitting efforts in behalf of the faith were the admiration of all mankind. He also proposed the health of Sir Gerold von Ebertus, soldier, scholar, and gentleman.

Rheinhold, always ready to continue to an indefinite extent any effort in the depletion of tankards, proposed the health of his friend and superior, Colonel Thanner. He took occasion to glorify the careful work done by the commander during the four years of his service in Villingen and commended his active care in keeping the invader within the

lines of the truce. Lumbas was inclined to take exception to the fulsome praise accorded Thanner. To him it did not seem to fit the easy-going and, in some respects, loose administration of the military affairs of Villingen. It was fuel to the flame kindled by his extreme views on discipline and vigilance, but beyond a scowl at Rheinhold and a significant glance at Robertus, his opposition to the sentiments did not manifest itself. The health of Philip Thanner was therefore drunk with no lessening of the enthusiasm that prevailed.

The party, freed from the restraint which naturally attended a conference of this kind, now separated into little groups of twos and threes and as the commandant rose to go, he turned to Von Dougal.

"Carolus will attend to your wants and find you suitable accommodations." Then, again reminding his officers of the appointment at three o'clock, added :

"I request the attendance at headquarters of all officers in full-dress uniform at the appointed hour. I also request Carolus and Lumbas to acquaint me not only with the fact of their notification to Sir Gerold, but to assist me in the preparation of such preliminaries as are necessary for the success of the ceremony which is to take place this afternoon."

Thanner took his departure, followed by Rheinhold and Haller.

"Lumbas," said Carolus, "Wilhelm von Dougal goes with me to my quarters where we shall arrange our somewhat disordered dress and also refresh ourselves. In an hour we shall be ready to receive you and be prepared to deliver the notification to our esteemed townsman, Sir Gerold."

Carolus led the way to their horses and in a few minutes they were slowly moving over the intervening space inside the wall, over the drawbridge, through the Franciscan gate and tower and thence into the city. A crowd of soldiers, civilians, peasants, and large numbers of women and children were awaiting the arrival of the two men. News of the day

was quickly in the possession of the townspeople and the extraordinary and exciting events were not only repeated from mouth to mouth, but the sad news of the fall of Rothweil was soon in the possession of the whole concourse. Wilhelm von Dougal was the hero of the hour and his coming was awaited with curiosity by the crowd. It was therefore no cause for surprise that when he was pointed out a great cheer went up for him. Hats were doffed, arms were presented, and handkerchiefs fluttered from street to street, from walk to doorstep and from many a window as they proceeded to Carolus's quarters.

Von Dougal repeatedly removed his hat and with a grave face acknowledged the compliments bestowed on him. They finally reached Carolus's residence and passing the great gate entered the courtyard. There they dismounted and threw the reins to the men in waiting. Carolus led the way again across the yard toward the large door adorned with heavy iron-work. He opened it, and stepping to one side, bade his guest enter.

"Welcome, Herr Wilhelm, to my modest apartments. They are not so showy and not so extensive as those of the prefecture, which you inhabited at Rothweil, but they are large enough to accommodate you comfortably, while you remain with us in Villingen. I am honored by your visit and it will be a great pleasure to me to have you regard my home as yours while it shelters you."

Von Dougal took a step to Carolus, threw both arms around him and in a voice which betrayed the deep emotion under which he was laboring, said :

"Carolus von Haisus, it is with deep gratitude that I accept your hospitality. I owe my life to you. You are indeed the generous-hearted man whom all love and respect. I appreciate your sincere friendship and bless the hour when I was brought so closely to you."

Von Dougal dropped his head on Carolus's shoulder and pressed him fervently. Thus they stood for some seconds

until Carolus, looking at Dougal's left arm, reminded him of the wound. Dougal smiled faintly.

"It is nothing ; merely a scratch. The skin is barely cut."

"Nevertheless, my friend, we will have it carefully examined at once and properly attended to. And now be pleased to step in here and take possession of our rooms."

He pulled a bell rope which hung inside the door of the anteroom and after the necessary commands to the servant for Von Dougal's comfort, entered his own apartments.

Carolus enjoyed a refreshing bath, and a complete change of clothes from the military uniform which he had worn during the past twenty-four hours and which plainly showed the rough usage and hardships which he and his little troop of scouts had undergone.

Then, after a substantial meal, he sent word to Von Dougal that he was ready to receive Captain Franciscus Lumbas, chief of artillery, and desired his presence also. Dougal, refreshed, was having his wound examined and dressed, as the servant arrived, bringing the message.

"My compliments to Herr Carolus von Haisus. I shall be ready in ten minutes."

The leech who had been summoned by Carolus was finishing the bandage.

"There ; the wound is nothing. It will not prevent using your arm as if nothing ailed it. It is more of a bruise than a cut, and will be healed in a few days. Good-day, Wilhelm von Dougal, I am proud to be of service to you."

With a profound bow, the man of medicine retired from the room and Von Dougal rapidly completed his toilet.

Carolus received him in the large living room that adjoined Dougal's quarters. This room resembled an arsenal more than a living room, for it was filled with arms of all descriptions, including steel armor of the ponderous and heavy kind used three centuries before the time of which we write, long lances and enormous pikes, two-handed swords, maces



**"I am honored by your visit, and it will be a great pleasure to me to
have you regard my home as yours while it shelters you."**

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with wicked spikes, and a great variety of smaller swords and daggers. Shields of all kinds hung on the wall, from the long infantry shield to the round buckler of the mounted knight, to which were festooned with much taste, a great variety of spurs, shoulder and leg pieces, and collars of the more modern kind.

The black oak of the floor, walls, and ceilings showed off the collection of military equipments to great effect. Nor were the trophies of peace less plentiful. Throughout the room were mounted stags' heads, antlers, wolf jaws, stuffed wild turkeys, owls and minor birds artistically surrounded with bows, arrows, powder flasks, and guns of heavy make, and probably of uncertain accuracy. Altogether, it was a curious collection of arms, accoutrements, and trophies.

Von Dougal took in the collection at a glance and said with a smile :

"The cradle of the warrior is worthy of the deeds that the house of Haisus has always been noted for. I am here, Herr Carolus, and await your pleasure."

"Lumbas has not yet arrived, but will be here presently. How does the wound fare?"

"It is nothing at all, I assure you. It is more a bruise than a cut, and will be entirely healed in a few days. You see it does not inconvenience me at all, since it has been properly dressed."

Von Dougal moved his arm in various ways to demonstrate the slightness of his injury.

"I am glad to hear it. Neubold is a very clever man, and of much experience. Ah! here comes Lumbas."

Lumbas entered the building without ceremony and passing into the room occupied by Carolus and Von Dougal greeted both men with cordiality.

"I am ready for the visit," he said.

"Good," said Carolus; "we will attend to our duty without delay, for unless I am mistaken, Sir Gerold von Ebertus will oppose, to a certain extent at least, the pro-

gramme which Colonel Thanner has laid out, and much explanation will have to be made and many things considered before he accepts the trust imposed. Sir Gerold has not forgotten the grievous humiliation to which he was subjected, and his proud nature may cause him to upset the plans which we hope to see fulfilled. But we shall see."

The three men walked out of the house and waited on the stone porch for Carolus's and Dougal's horses, which were brought out quickly from the barns across the courtyard. Then all mounted, and attended by three lusty young fellows, passed out of the gate and into the principal street of the city.

CHAPTER VIII.

BEHIND THE WALLS.

THE city of Villingen possessed two principal streets or avenues which bisected each other at right angles and thus formed at its centre a cross; the longer sweep or street beginning at the St. Francis and ending at the St. John Tower; the shorter street beginning at the St. George and ending at the St. Wendel Tower. A large octagonal space was formed at the centre of the city about the intersection of these two streets. Facing this octagon was the artistic and beautiful Rathhaus, one of the finest buildings of its period in Southwestern Germany. Diagonally across the space the Minster raised its two tall and graceful spires. This large and magnificent edifice was remarkable for the curious construction of its towers, one being Byzantine in style, while the other was Gothic. The old Minster was very picturesque with its flying and hanging buttresses, the artistic foliations of its enormous windows and its sculptured finials and gargoyles. Numerous pinnacles adorned the outer buttresses and the high, sweeping, stone steps that led to its principal entrance gave its entire front a perspective and dignity far beyond its real dimensions. Both the Rathhaus and the Minster were built soon after the eventful struggles for freedom which ended with the treaty of Ulm in 1218. By the provisions of this treaty Villingen secured her independence and maintained it uninterruptedly until 1326,

when the city voluntarily placed herself under the protection of Austria, retaining, however, all her independent rights and privileges.

Founded by Ludwig the pious, in the year 814, in a very crude manner, the city gradually increased and developed. At the close of the tenth century, it received market, coining, and tax rights and privileges, but it was not until 1119 that Villingen took a formidable and powerful place in the history of Southwestern Germany. Berthold III. projected the city as it existed at the period of which we write and the work upon it was continued with more or less interruption for one hundred years. In the year 1209, its nobles and burghers and their dependents began the struggle for independence which was secured, after a devastating war, in 1218.

During the period of her independence, her great buildings and many of her best houses were built. Although the interior of the small city was plain and her houses commonplace, they were of good height and solidly built. The houses of nobles were exceptions and as they commanded all the strategic points inside the city, they were naturally of greater size, finer construction, and more importance. Huge chimneys, gables, and many-colored tiled roofs lent the picturesque aspect which Villingen presents from without the walls. Its streets, all of which cross the two principal avenues at right angles, were narrow, paved with stone, and drained to the centre. The people of the middle class, the burghers and the artisans lived in these intersecting streets, while the poorer people inhabited the back alleys.

Three large houses were specially notable in the city. One, about half way between St. John's Tower and the octagon in the centre of the city, was called Egon's Heim. It was strongly built of stone, and its lower windows were barred with enormous iron grilles, while a great gate similar to the entrance of Carolus von Haisus's house gave sole entrance to the house by way of the inner court.

The second house, Berthold's Thurm, occupied a position

on the principal avenue about midway between the octagon and St. Francis Tower. It was older, more forbidding in aspect, and still more strongly fortified than Egon's Heim.

The third house, Ebertus's Thurm, was at the corner of the intersecting street and the octagon place and commanded a fine view both up and down the long avenue, as well as the shorter one from east to west. This house was by far the most picturesque of the three and being more modern than either Egon's Heim or Berthold's Thurm, was more pleasing to the eye and more artistic in its architectural design. Extensive, yet carefully planned for street defence, it towered high above the surrounding houses. Although built in the year 1278, it was in fine repair, the ravages of time being overcome by constant attention to the evidences of decay. Beautiful oriel windows adorned the upper stories of this structure which, with its high chimneys and great tower, its fine glazed tiles and sculptured gargoyles, made an impressive and notable edifice. This house had been in Gerold von Ebertus's family for nearly three hundred and fifty years. It was now owned and occupied by him.

During the four years which preceded the beginning of this story, there was constant clashing between the municipal and the military officers. Taxes had been increased to a point where it was impossible for the burgher and peasant to save anything. The commonwealth barns fairly overflowed with tithes that were exacted by the military and ecclesiastical tax gatherers and the citizen groaned and fumed under the increasing burdens to which he was subjected. Naturally the recalcitrant townspeople sought relief through the chief magistrate of the municipality and his officers, and in accordance with the wishes of their constituents, they protested against the constantly increasing exactions which were imposed upon them. This produced discord and reprisals, and in the absence of a military governor there was constant bickering and recrimination.

The military officers justified the heavy levies by pleading

the imminent dangers that surrounded the city, and seized all the tithes, leaving the ecclesiastics to shift for themselves. This brought about a coalition between the magistrates and the clericals, which widened the breach still more. Open rupture seemed inevitable during the autumn of 1633, when the sudden approach of the invader and the fall of Rothweil brought all internecine quarrels to a standstill.

The burgher, the artisan, the peasant, and the magistrate were suddenly transformed into the soldier, and the need for common defence removed all cause for complaint based on the extortions of the military authorities. The ecclesiastics again deserted by their allies, sullenly shut themselves into their buildings and administered their functions only in the most perfunctory manner. They socially ostracized everyone who bore arms, and mingled only with the citizens when absolutely necessary. Breno, prior of the Franciscan monks and head of the Church, deplored this condition of affairs and strove to his utmost to bring about a reasonable solution of the differences that separated the people. He met with small success, however, and for the first time since his incumbency of the position of prior, did his efforts fall upon barren ground. The turbulent and savage influences of war had made even the pious and God-fearing citizens of Villingen careless of their faith and indifferent to their spiritual welfare.

Breno had but one staunch ally in his efforts to set aside the denial of respect and authority under which the Church was suffering. It was Gerold von Ebertus who was loyal not only to Breno, for the sake of the personal friendship that existed between them, but faithful to the traditions that were indissolubly linked with the glory of his house and the expansion of the Church in Southern Germany. The friendship of these two men was beautiful. Their lives were cemented by the analogy of their natures and the endearing influences of close communion and unity of thought. Their studies, animated with the enthusiasm of love for in-

tellectual pursuits, broadened them in the great questions of the day and welded their thoughts into forms of beauty and enduring love.

It was not strange, therefore, when the practical question of common safety closed every door to individual right or the established privileges of class, that Gerold lifted his voice for the justice of the common cause for which Breno so eloquently but insistently contended. He admonished Colonel Thanner to beware of the example which he gave, and cautioned him against the consequences of violation of rights and privileges which had for years been scrupulously observed. He also pointed out to the commandant the consequences to the spiritual welfare of the city which the opposition engendered, reminding him of the undeniable fact that the success of the city in the past rested largely on the deep religious feelings and reverence of its defenders. Without the bulwark of unity of religious thought, utter waywardness and degeneration would result. That was a natural inheritance of war and it would insidiously work its way, beginning with the worst elements in the city and ending only with the moral ruin of all classes.

His advice was listened to with great respect, but it was not acted upon at all.

The lines were sharply drawn between ecclesiastic and warrior, and relations were strained to the utmost. Gerold and Breno deplored the condition of affairs, but were at their wits' ends to allay the tension. It thus happened that Gerold and the prior were closeted together at Ebertus's Thurm on the eventful morning when Carolus returned from the fruitless but significant expedition. They had again threshed the old arguments for the rights and justifications of the Church, and while they agreed on the unassailable arguments which they uttered, they also agreed that they were valueless, because they failed to produce any effect upon the contentious classes.

Might, not right, was the factor that decided the questions

at issue and they had come to the conclusion that it was best to temporize with the opposition under the stress of need. Gerold was slowly pacing the room with his hands clasped behind his back, while the prior, with thoughtful brow, sat on a low chair and rested his left arm on a table. His hand supported his head and he watched Gerold's movements as he paced up and down the apartments.

CHAPTER IX.

GEROLD ACCEPTS AN APPOINTMENT.

THE consultation between Gerold and Breno was interrupted by a sharp knock on the door that opened into the main hall of the second story. Gerold stopped in his walk and bade the intruder enter. An elderly man of fine appearance, clad in semi-military habiliments, entered the room and saluted the two men. Gerold with his hands still clasped behind him, looked inquiringly at the new comer.

"Sir Gerold, is it permitted me to give you news of great importance?"

"Speak out, Kuno, it must be a matter of great importance, since you disturb us against orders."

"Sir Gerold and his worthiness will pardon the interruption, but word has just been passed that the expedition which left a day or two ago in command of Carolus von Haisus has returned with bad news from our friends at Rothweil. It is announced that our sister city has been betrayed by its prefect, Werner von Klutus, and is in the hands of the enemy."

Gerold dropped his hands to his side, then suddenly clasped them in front, while his face assumed lines which both friend and foe feared.

"Who says this?" he demanded in a raised tone, and took a quick forward step.

"It is a common report," returned Kuno; "not only is

the whole district of Rothweil in the Swedes' hands, but a large troop of cavalry was seen from our walls scarcely two hours ago ; your Lordship can see the signals on the Franciscan Tower if you will step to the window."

Gerold did not seem to hear the eager reference to the tower, but for a time looked intently at Breno, who was plainly startled and painfully impressed by the unexpected blow, then turned again to the chief household servant.

"Do you repeat to me idle gossip, or is there reliable authority for your statement?"

"Your Lordship, Heinrich, the secretary of the burgo-master, told it to me less than a quarter of an hour ago. I heard it from all sides, but did not wish to interrupt you until I was satisfied that it was so."

Gerold again looked at Breno, then turned upon his heel and walking to the large window which commanded an uninterrupted view of the principal street, his eyes sought the tower. He looked at the signals and then turned to Kuno.

"You have done well to inform me. Send Heinrich to me, if he can be found." Kuno bowed deferentially and withdrew from the room. The door no sooner shut out his person than Gerold moved quickly toward Breno, who looked at him with a face full of sorrow, and then noting the bitterness and anger of Gerold's expression, the kind countenance of the prior assumed a fixed appealing gaze as he advanced to meet his friend. Breno was the first to speak and said :

"Would to God, the news we have just heard were untrue ! It must be untrue ! Surely no German nobleman could be so recreant to his God, his country, and his duty !"

Gerold gazed at him steadily, then quietly laying his hand on Breno's shoulder, said :

"My dear friend, have you forgotten who it was that four years ago pierced my heart with agony, whose venomous darts struck deep into my life ? Have you forgotten the shameful falsehoods that were uttered against me and my

house? What can you expect from such a man but deceit, falsehood, and treachery? You call him a German noble! Ah! such an one prostitutes not only the proud state of nobility, but debases the very image of man. Reflect how in the very flush of his victory over me, he intrigued to capture the governorship of the district. How he hoped to crown the confusion with which he overwhelmed me, by seeking the altitude which he knew he could not dignify, but from which he hoped to lord it over my city and myself. Do you look for heroic service from such a man? Can we expect aught else from such a craven?"

Gerold was visibly agitated and resumed his pacing with accelerated step.

"Ah, my dear Gerold, be not uncharitable to your enemies. Let not your feelings betray you into bitter words, nor harbor ill-will against those who have wronged you. Remember the precepts of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and cast all unworthy thoughts out of your heart."

Gerold did not answer at once, but continued in his walk. After a few moments he stopped.

"'T is well! I take your counsel," he said, as he again walked with bowed head. A look at his face, however, revealed more worldly feelings. His fine eyes glittered with a dangerous light, while his twitching nostrils and contracting brows clearly revealed the intensity of his thoughts.

Breno noticed the consuming passion that raged within him, but said nothing. He had seen the uncontrollable fury of this remarkable man before and therefore held his peace.

He walked past Gerold and gazed sadly out of the window at the groups of excited people on the square. A group larger than the rest seemed to congregate almost beneath Gerold's Thurm and every few moments many faces were turned upward toward the windows where Breno stood. A second knock came at the door and a quick "Enter!" following, the old house servant ushered a young man of good appearance dressed in a civilian's garb, into the room.

"Heinrich Vogel, your Lordship, for whom you sent," said Kuno, as he announced the new arrival and then quietly withdrew.

"Herr Vogel, it has come to my ears that Rothweil is in the hands of the Swedes and that it has been treacherously delivered. Is this true?"

"It is, your Lordship! Sir Werner von Klutus betrayed his nobles, his soldiers, and his townsmen, and opened the gates of Rothweil to Colonel Rau and his soldiers. The city was taken with but little opposition."

Gerold again looked at Breno, as the words of the secretary corroborated his judgment of Klutus.

Breno raised his face and closed his eyes as if in prayer for the unfortunate inhabitants of Rothweil. He turned to Gerold with a look of resignation and said:

"God will not suffer this outrage without punishment, nor can the will of man quietly submit to such unheard of injustice! You have apparently judged this base man correctly, my friend."

Gerold again turned to the secretary.

"From whom have you heard this terrible story?"

"I heard it in the Rathhaus, where the burgomaster and council were assembled. Colonel Philip Thanner told it in detail, and I was present to enter it upon the records."

"I thank you, Herr Vogel, for your attention. My compliments to the burgomaster."

He ceremoniously bowed the secretary out of the room and closing the door, placed his back against it. In a stern and raised voice he addressed Breno.

"Are you satisfied, my friend? Did I make a mistake when I refused to accept the proffered honor which the Court of Austria sought to bestow upon me after years of practical seclusion? Did I misjudge the tendency and direction of events, when I declined restoration of my ancient titles and honors, if it involved the retention at Rothweil of that nameless traitor? Oh, the shortsightedness of our superiors at

Vienna! Oh, the hollow mockery of favoritism and the sordid meanness of those men who are responsible for this blow! The fatal seed of preferment was sown on susceptible ground and the harvest of deep despair is now garnered. Ah, Breno, one almost fails to comprehend the cruelties and the savage excesses that are committed in the name of God and Him crucified. The boundless misery of our countrymen and the vast destruction to our fair land are surely increased and advanced by the false and selfish favorites who attach themselves to the Court."

"Gerold, speak not so bitterly of our Court or of his Majesty's councillors. All is not corrupt at Vienna."

Breno was disturbed by Gerold's outburst, which had so quickly taken the place of calm reasoning.

"No, not all," continued Gerold, in a terrible voice. "By chance, sometimes, the smile of the King and his courtiers falls upon a worthy man and advancement is effected by fear of strong personality, but oftener the indifferent shrug and the callous sneer drag honest merit to the ground to be trampled upon by those who are unfit either to counsel or to judge. Speak not to me of his Majesty's councillors! Did not you, did not I, have occasion to measure their value? There are exceptions, but they are not in Vienna. They are at Nuremberg, at Munich, at Stuttgart, at the head of their devoted followers, with their faces to the enemy, shields on arms and hands upon their swords instead of upon false hearts or in the pocket of the first suppliant that comes their way. The exceptions serve God and country, not God and mammon. Their faces are marked with the stern furrows of duty and patriotism, instead of the false smiles begot of opportunity and the desire for acquisition of wealth. Did Klutus secure command of Rothweil by any means except bribery, and has he gathered unto himself any of his wealth except through the sweat and blood of his countrymen? Is not this a bonus on debauchery, and a premium on rascality? Oh, Breno, the ramifications of this evil horde are far reach-

ing ! Their greed stretches out to and past the line of the defender. Its soft hand can be found in the silk linings of the invader's coat and its operation is disguised beneath the sweet glances of a Lucretia."

Gerold gradually controlled his furious passion and returned to his wonted calmness. He wrung his hands and nervously twitched his fingers as he concluded.

Breno was startled at the vehemence of his language and shifted uneasily in his chair. Gerold continued his walk while Breno idly played with the ivory crucifix which hung from his belt. A knock again sounded on the panels of the door. After a moment's hesitation and a reassuring glance at Breno, Gerold quietly commanded entrance.

Kuno, evidently disturbed and uncertain, advanced into the room.

"Your Lordship, pardon my intrusion, but three gentlemen have announced themselves. They are Herr Carolus von Haisus, Franciscus Lumbas, and a stranger by the name of Von Dougal. I told them you were engaged, but they said their business was pressing, and they must have audience. So, I ventured to disturb you again." With a bow, Kuno again retreated to the door and awaited Gerold's orders.

"Bid them enter at once, Kuno. Nay, remain where you are, Breno," he said to the prior, as he arose to leave the apartment ! The business of these gentlemen must be more or less public, and therefore you are interested. Besides, you may be of assistance to me. You know, I have no secrets from you, and it will please me to have you remain."

Carolus, at the head of the little party, smilingly entered the room, stepped up to Gerold and extended his hand, passing the commonplace courtesies of the day. He then stood aside and in presenting his companions said :

"You know our old friend of the artillery, Franciscus Lumbas, and this gentleman," pointing to the notary, "is Wilhelm von Dougal, notary of Rothweil."

Gerold presented Lumbas and Von Dougal to Breno. Lumbas bowed civilly to him, while Von Dougal showed the pleasure the acquaintance gave him. Carolus, being an old friend of Breno's, smilingly nodded his head. All eyes then turned upon Carolus. His fine face and expressive eyes sought Gerold and in a clear, musical voice, he addressed him.

"Sir Gerold von Ebertus, you have no doubt heard the sad tidings of the fall of Rothweil and the advance of the invader upon our city. You have no doubt also heard that his Majesty's courier and his escort, who were destined for Villingen were intercepted and either killed or taken prisoners. That courier had the original copy of an appointment to Sir Gerold von Ebertus, commanding him to assume chief control of his Majesty's fortresses of Villingen and Rothweil, and empowered him to make such transfers of authority and troops as he deemed expedient and proper. The imperial papers also contained a complete restoration of your original rank and titles. At a council this morning, the commandant, in presence of his staff and principal officers, empowered us to notify you that at three o'clock this day, he would assemble the civil and military officers of Villingen at your house, and formally lay the commission before you in the name of his Majesty, the German Emperor and King of Austria."

Gerold took a step backward when he heard the purpose of their visit, and while plainly agitated, he strove to calm himself. His face was pale and revealed the intense struggle for control under which he labored.

All eyes were upon him. Eagerly they sought for the acceptance upon which so much depended. Carolus, though cool and collected while he was delivering the notification, could now scarcely contain himself. His admiration of the man before him was intense. This moment was the culmination of many months' secret manipulation and scheming, and success or failure depended now upon the cast of the die.

Breno, although startled and surprised, rapidly comprehended the whole tendency and importance of the plan. Lumbas was agitated and furtively scrutinized the play of emotion upon Gerold's face, while Von Dougal calmly but respectfully kept in the background of the agitated group. Gerold passed his hand across his brow several times while he looked squarely through Carolus and into the sorrowful past. A vision of a once happy home, of love, respect, and reverence, seemed to shape itself in the deep shadows of the room, and from the misty atmosphere a picture of domestic peace seemed to rise. A woman of tall stature, blonde, and fair to look upon, led a youth of fine, manly features by the hand. Gerold closed his eyes to Carolus and turned them upon the mystic picture. It gathered clearness as he calmly folded his arms and sought its details. A look of anguish and of remorse lay upon the fair features of the woman. Deep humility and contrition swayed the fair form as though in the grasp of a storm. The uplifted face of the youth told the struggle between love and duty and ever and anon his delicately formed and expressive face was turned with appealing glances to Gerold. Stern and grave was the father's look at the woman whose whole character was measured at a glance. The retrospect touched no tender chord of memory, yet it brought back no feelings of indignation at wrongs and humiliations, at wounded pride and base ingratitude, from which he had suffered in the past. Calmly he viewed the vision. His stern features relaxed and a sorrowful change was noticeable as Gerold looked upon the youthful, almost childlike lines of his son's face. The struggle for mastery was almost too much for the boy's tender nature and the expression of his face was one of mingled love, duty, hope, and expectancy. The picture appeared to fade away, and gradually the image of the woman was blotted out. Her hand vanished out of her son's grasp and a bright smile broke over his handsome face and he extended both hands to his father, in undisguised happiness. The picture dis-

appeared and Gerold with a supreme effort forced himself again to remember his surroundings. He opened his eyes and was painfully surprised at the intense attitudes of his friends. They had followed the play of his features and in their various ways, interpreted the decision which he was to give. He gazed at them with a calm, grave face, and in a steady voice addressed them.

"I am not indifferent to the honor you bring me notice of, nor do I underrate the kindness, respect, and confidence which inspired the petition to the Crown for my reappointment, for I know well that such a sweeping appointment was never secured without great pressure. To whom I am indebted for this, I can readily surmise. I am beholden to you for the confidence, but you will pardon me, if I ask you upon whose authority you have acted, or rather upon what information you have based your unusual action?"

"Sir Gerold," said Carolus, as he stepped closer, "do not think that the action which we have taken was decided upon hastily or without reason, for we have here a gentleman who can not only assert its truth, but will give you in detail the story of the lamentable fall of our sister city and also the particulars of the imperial order. I ask Wilhelm von Dougal to bear witness to my statement and acquaint Sir Gerold von Ebertus with the details of the appointment."

Von Dougal moved a few steps nearer Gerold and rapidly and succinctly stated the facts, leaving out the references to himself as far as possible. Gerold and Breno were amazed at the shameful duplicity of the conspirators, but were also impressed with the evident power of the man before them.

A deep silence followed the conclusion of the second recital of the notary. It was broken by Gerold, who aroused himself from a reverie into which he had again fallen.

"Under the circumstances, Col. Philip Thanner and his officers have acted strictly within the lines of propriety. The evident intention of the Emperor and officers at Vienna should be observed and their dictates carried out. The removal of

the principal objection to the acceptance of the former appointment leaves me no reasonable ground for refusing the very honorable but heavily responsible position. I therefore incline to the position and will formally accept the trust at the hands of the civil and military officers of our city, at the appointed time."

The gratification that Gerold's words produced was evident. Carolus grasped both his hands and in a thick voice thanked him for his patriotism and sense of duty to his country. Lumbas was visibly overcome and incapable of speech. Von Dougal congratulated him heartily and from the expression of his large eyes, Gerold knew he had made a staunch friend and supporter. Breno drew near to Gerold last of all. Slowly and with deliberate steps he approached him. His pale face was full of emotion and love for the man whose soul he had measured and understood, whose character he had seen blossom in prosperity and power, yet develop and ripen in adversity and humiliation. Slowly he elevated his hands, with an exalted mien he raised his face to heaven and with a tremulous voice asked the blessing of God upon Gerold and those assembled.

CHAPTER X.

LUCRETIA AND HULDAH.

THE house of the prefect at Rothweil was a spacious structure, and consisted of a main or central portion with a rather deep wing at either side. The large garden at the rear of the premises was enclosed by a high wall, which extended in an irregular curved line from the wings of the house. The house was plainly but substantially built of stone. The central portion, three stories in height, was used by the municipal officers in the administration of local and district affairs. The entire right wing, two stories in height, was the residence of Sir Werner von Klutus and his family. The entire left wing, also two stories in height, was occupied by Lucretia von Klutus, her son and servants.

The left wing of the prefecture was so arranged that it could be entirely shut off from the main building. Entrance to the living rooms could be effected only by the private door opening upon a side street, or by the rear entrance which opened into the garden. In the living room of the left wing, three days after the surrender of Rothweil, a tall, stately woman was slowly pacing the room. Her head was bent down upon the richly fluted lace collar which she wore, and her face bore evidences of deep concern. She stopped every few moments and listened intently, as if expecting someone. She then resumed her pacing. She was a woman of striking appearance as she lifted her head, and the expression changed

from moroseness to keen attention. A wealth of blonde hair partly coiled up under the dainty white lace cap of the period, set off a face, which, while it lacked regularity and character, was nevertheless of singular attractiveness. A broad forehead showed under the peak of the triangular lace cap, and beneath the delicately pencilled eyebrows her large, clear blue eyes compensated for the rather small nose. Her large mouth was slightly turned at one corner and covered remarkably beautiful teeth. The contour of her face was inclined to broadness at the cheek bones, but the crowning beauties of the whole face were a beautiful clear complexion and the mass of wavy golden hair. She was one of those remarkable women whose age might be twenty-five or thirty-five.

Her dress was rich and becoming. A high, light blue bodice, elaborately embroidered with gold, was cut off at the shoulders, from which enormous hanging sleeves of dark blue velvet reached below her knees. Covering her arms were close-fitting sleeves of slashed silk and lace. The skirt of her dress was also light blue, and from the waist the huge paniers folded back into a train of the same dark blue velvet. A magnificent string of pearls hung in a double row around her neck and fell in a half-circle over her bosom. Her feet were incased in the buff-colored undressed leather shoes with bright red heels of the period. The woman walked to and fro for several minutes and then suddenly looked out of the window. A smile lit up her face as she waved her handkerchief at the person she had seen and evidently expected.

She remained at the window until the closing door below announced the arrival of the expected caller, and then slowly walked to the entrance of the room. A tall woman, spare and angular, entered unannounced.

"Well, Lucretia, I am here at last!"

"It is about time, Aunt Huldah; I have been waiting impatiently for over an hour. What has detained you?"

"Detained me? Everything, everyone."

"That is very definite, but it matters nothing. How is he, and what is he doing?"

"Who? That is also very indefinite. It requires a specific question to obtain a specific answer."

"You are not particularly charming or indulgent this morning, Aunt Huldah; what has disturbed your temper?"

"Oh, nothing unusual. Of whom were you inquiring?" The newcomer asked this question as she sat down in an easy chair and stretched out her long and large feet in front of her. She turned them from one side to the other, as if admiring them, while she drummed upon the arms of the chair with her large, bony, and coarse fingers. She looked up at Lucretia with her weak and watery gray eyes, while a malignant smile played about her large mouth.

"You know very well whom I mean. I imagine you have been rather badly entertained to make you feel so cross and uninteresting this morning. Has someone been making fun of you in the presence of others? Been praising your marvellous beauty and ravishing figure? Your statuesque walk and your dainty ways? You generally absorb these fulsome praises when uttered by gentlemen in whom you are personally interested, but it is different when your admirers utter their commonplaces. It is then 'poking fun at you,' or 'insulting your plainness,' but let us drop these compliments and prepare for the business we have in hand."

Huldah was steadily gathering anger at the flippant manner in which she was being treated, and an ugly light showed in her eye, while the skin across her mouth was drawn like a drumhead. She slowly opened her lips, showing the illy-formed and bad teeth. A vicious, wolf-like grin made her face appear more like that of a beast than that of a human being. As Lucretia concluded, her face relaxed and settled again into its usual leer.

"Yes, you are right. It is of no use for us to pass compliments. The hand needs the glove, and the glove is supposed to be made for the hand. It warms or adorns as

the case may be. I have been the glove for years and have been made use of. If it were not for the fact that I am still necessary, I would have been cast aside with as much thanks as an old pair, worn out at the finger-tips. I am thankful that I have been able to keep the spots from the outside, however, for goodness only knows to what uses the wearers have put me."

Lucretia arched her brows, and a slight sneer played about the corners of her mouth. She turned partly around and looked superciliously over her shoulder at her aunt.

"You seem to have qualms of conscience this morning. I never supposed you capable of realizing your true position or your merits. Your frankness is charming even if your simile is ordinary and coarse. It is always comical to hear you enlarge on the wickedness of others and take upon yourself that air of innocence and injured self-consciousness. It fools others, but does not fool me; therefore keep your platitudes for those with whom they have effect and do not waste time in moralizing with me."

"You always wince when the needle pricks," rejoined the aunt, "and you are pleasant only when you are intent upon some pet idea which you either cannot or dare not carry out without my help."

"Cannot! Dare not! You have an over-weening belief in your abilities second only to your vanity regarding your personal charms."

"Stop, Lucretia! Do not say things you will be sorry for. Even you, with your fine looks, must know that you cannot throw dirt at me without smutting yourself."

"Never mind that part, my dear aunt, probity of character is not one of the attributes of the Klutus family, and we therefore expect not too much from you."

"You are right, Lucretia. When that superior donkey, Gerold, wooed and won you, my conscience would not allow me to turn on the light. He was so superior, and you were so charming, young, and innocent, that a happy future seemed assured."

A wicked grin broke over the face of the woman as she delivered this thrust at her niece. Lucretia said nothing, but walked up and down the apartment. The blow struck home, however. It plainly showed its effect in her face. The aunt continued her assault with great satisfaction.

"But this, of course, was many years ago when youth and inexperience made the world look rosy. When Arnoud Heilprin came upon the scene your simple nature did not prevent you from falling an easy victim to his wiles. Your visits to your Uncle Klutus at Rothweil were many and your stays were long, my little lamb. So, when I came upon the scene, that little baboon Berlich came in for a share of your attentions and so on, always with my assistance, until Rau and D'Arville appeared, when your faithful and loyal heart took a great jump and again the 'old glove' was used. Well, I have seen him and he will be here in an hour or so. You need not scowl as if you would eat me."

Lucretia's anger was gradually rising and her usually attractive face took on hard and stern lines. The charming aunt noted it, and brought her unpleasant reminiscences to a sudden close, by giving her niece the information which she so anxiously awaited.

"There, Huldah," she said; "you have delivered yourself again. I do not thank you for the unsolicited references to the past, and suggest that you confine yourself to the present. It is more agreeable and more pertinent. But let us drop these matters and proceed with the affairs of the day. Have you heard what Sir Werner is going to do, and what his intentions are regarding our households?"

"No; nothing is settled. Colonels Rau and D'Arville are in possession of everything, even Klutus's moneys, or at least such as they can find. Werner is very quiet and very nervous over his stroke and would like to get away. I think he fears rough handling by the townspeople, if he stays here. There is a double guard at each entrance of the house, and no one is allowed to enter the other wing except the members of the family and servants."

"Are all the soldiers in the town?"

"Nearly all of them. I asked Colonel D'Arville this morning if he expected any effort from Villingen. He smiled, and said: 'That commandant over there is too careful to expose himself. He is afraid of his own shadow.' From this, you will see that no danger is near."

"Be not too sure. Wilhelm von Dougal and several dozen of riders escaped last Tuesday night, and you may depend upon it that they made straight for Villingen. It was a fine piece of work for Colonel Rau with eight hundred riders to let the very man escape from whom we had most to fear, for he alone of all that were in command, knew of the appointment of my—, of Gerold von Ebertus, and unless I am much mistaken, the tidings of capture and the appointment of Gerold to the governorship are in possession of the commandant of Villingen."

Lucretia again walked nervously up and down the room while Huldah, serious and abstracted, gazed steadily out of the window.

"Konrad von Horgen is badly wounded and captive. Martinez is killed. Hugo is captured. The Imperial courier and his escort are in our hands, yet that eel of a notary got away; did I not warn you, Lucretia, and did I not warn Sir Werner against letting him join his troop?"

"Do not cast reproaches. You know that he was ordered to remain in the prefecture, to do some important work, but he hurried through it, and without changing his civilian's clothes, joined his soldiers. Arnoud was for having him ordered back, but Klutus did not dare do it for fear of his suspicion. You know all this, why do you refer to it?" said Lucretia.

"This is all very nice, but he took part in the parade, did he not? and he fell like a thunderbolt upon the south gate with his hundred and seventy-five men. He is a nice little eel, but he has sharp teeth and bit over a hundred Swedes, nearly half of whom will never again trouble him. D'Arville

says it was the most desperate work he had seen in a long time. Rau was so anxious to get him that he had over four hundred men out scouting for him. All they got was half a dozen worn-out riders who escaped the trap set for Dougal."

"I am not surprised," said Lucretia. "Werner always underrated Von Dougal's abilities. I knew that he was not only a man of nerve, but a most skilful master of arms. When he vanquished Hafer, the best swordsman that ever lived in this town, it was a surprise, and when he took up the cudgels in behalf of Amalia, Arnoud knew enough to keep at least snarling distance."

"Yes," rejoined Huldah, "it was a good thing for Werner, too; it saved him a lot of worry, for between calling his confederate to time, and standing between his daughter and him, he was in a fine stew."

"By the way, Aunt Huldah, what has become of the saintly Amalia and her stiff-backed mother? I have missed them since the day before the interesting change of ownership of this blessed little town."

"Oh, they are over there," Huldah pointed to the other wing of the house. "They are more exclusive than ever."

"Do you think that Amalia has recovered from that fit of love which so violently agitated her?"

"I do not know and do not care. That fine-feathered warrior from Villingen seems to think too much of his skin to risk visits to Rothweil."

"Who? What warrior from Villingen?" queried Lucretia, in surprise.

"Whom do you suppose I meant?"

"Whom? Why Wilhelm von Dougal!"

"Lucretia, what a foolish thing you are. Men do not always fight only when their personal affairs are at stake! Not everyone is as selfish as you are. There are some things that take men out of their paths not directly connected with their own affairs. I mean Carolus von Haisus."

"Really! That good-looking icicle who stands so close

to my former lord and master," mused Lucretia. Then turning to her aunt with a saucy toss of her head, she continued :

" So you have also ferreted out this little matter ; you are wonderfully clever. But how strangely you seem to be out of your province when you try to philosophize. Then I am selfish, am I ? "

" Of course you are. Have you just discovered it ? "

" Thank you, my good aunt ; it runs in the family, like rickets. Since when have you imagined yourself free from the baleful effects of selfishness ? "

A knock at the door brought further compliments to a sudden close.

CHAPTER XI.

D'ARVILLE VISITS LUCRETIA.

A PRETTY maid servant responded to the invitation to enter. With a graceful little courtesy, she announced in French that Colonel D'Arville begged a few moments audience with Madame Lucretia.

"Oh, very well, Henrietta, bid Colonel D'Arville enter."

With an apologetic air, she turned to her aunt as if she were about to confer a favor which she thought might not be accepted, and said :

"Will you remain, my dear aunt, or would you rather attend to such business as you may have and return later?"

The cool manner in which she dismissed her relative was characteristic of the woman.

"Yes, my charming niece, I will attend to a few matters which need my attention. I will see you this afternoon. Now mind you ! be on your guard in relation to our private matters and be sure to keep him on edge."

Huldah disappeared into an adjoining room and then left for the right wing of the prefecture.

Lucretia smoothed her gown, gave her hair and cap a few graceful strokes and looked at her reflection in a long mirror which was hung between two windows. A self-satisfied smile played on her lips as she turned to leave the room to receive her visitor. The rustle of her dress, as she entered the room where Colonel D'Arville was, attracted his attention,

"Good morning, my charming friend ! Phœbus sheds his loveliest light on you this bright, beautiful morning. I hope you are well ?"

"Now, my dear Colonel. Pray remember that you are not in France, but just in plain Germany, where everything is matter of fact and commonplace," rejoined Lucretia, as she extended her hand and gave him a most bewitching smile.

"Matter of fact, perhaps, but commonplace in your presence, never !" gallantly replied the soldier. He carried her hand to his lips and gently retained it while he looked into her clear blue eyes.

A slightly confused state of mind had come over Lucretia under his steady smiling glance. She turned abruptly from him, and said :

"Will you be seated, Colonel D'Arville ? I have something to say to you ; trivial, perhaps, to you, but important to me."

"Your slightest wish shall be a command to me, and shall be carried out if in my power."

"Be careful, my dear Colonel, I may get you into trouble, if you promise me in advance." Lucretia smiled archly and cast a coquettish glance at him as she settled herself in a graceful attitude among the cushions of a large divan.

"As if such a charming woman could get anyone into trouble under any circumstances ! Surely loveliness and loftiness are synonymous in the character, as well as in the person of Madame Lucretia !"

D'Arville made a sweeping bow, and flourished the long plumes of his velvet cap in a half circle around him. The polished and crafty Frenchman knew how to worm himself into the graces of womankind. He had measured Lucretia with unerring accuracy and laid siege to obtain ascendancy over her. He understood the vulnerable defence of mock modesty and reserve and therefore trained his full batteries of flattery and homage upon her. He was a consummate

courtier and intuitively divined the purposes of Lucretia. He also gauged the aims and intentions of the aunt, and while the blandishments of Lucretia flattered his susceptible heart, the coarser but more acute wiles of her aunt caused him to be alert for complications which might revert upon him in view of his peculiar relations with Marshal Horn.

D'Arville, during the five years which had elapsed since his French division had joined the armies of Gustavus Adolphus, had gathered to himself a goodly fortune as his share of the plunder and ransoms extorted from the unfortunate victims of their successes, and although he managed to despatch a portion of it to France, the greater portion was still undivided. He therefore took due care that nothing should interfere with its final distribution or in any way prejudice the good favor in which he stood with his superiors.

When D'Arville concluded his pretty speech, a warm flush spread over Lucretia's face. The first gun penetrated the sham defences of her shallow nature. Her meetings with D'Arville hitherto had been in the presence of others and under trying circumstances. They were joint conspirators in the plot to surrender Rothweil, and while Lucretia never lost an opportunity to practise her wiles upon the men with whom she came in contact, the exigencies of the conspiracy had not permitted of a successful flirtation and her conquest of D'Arville had not heretofore progressed rapidly. Now, however, when their efforts were crowned with success and several days had elapsed since Rothweil had fallen into the enemy's hands, she determined to sound Colonel Rau and D'Arville, regarding Werner von Klutus, and incidentally try her wiles upon the susceptible warriors, to accomplish the complete downfall of Gerold von Ebertus. Her intense hatred of her former husband was fanned into a living flame when his unexpected appointment arrived at Rothweil. That he should be suddenly transformed from the retired nobleman into the

exalted and powerful governor of the district, and at a time, too, when she and her band of conspirators were planning to deliver Rothweil and capture Villingen unawares, was a reversal of fortune which had not even entered into their calculations.

Lucretia, therefore determined to neutralize the power given to Villingen and used every resource within her reach to accomplish it.

Colonel Rau, coarse and bluff, was cool and distant to Lucretia, but D'Arville, polished and polite, responded to the scarcely concealed advances which she made towards him and made no pretence of concealing his admiration of her charms.

Lucretia nervously toyed with the string of pearls which hung over her bosom while she looked at D'Arville from her drooping lashes.

"Well, my dear friend," said D'Arville, "what is it that seems to rest so heavily upon your mind?" He seated himself upon the divan, threw his arm over the back of it and gazed with undisguised admiration at her.

"To be candid, my dear Colonel, it is the great fear of capture and punishment which we are exposed to from Villingen."

She looked at D'Arville with well-feigned alarm.

"Is that all? Why, it is impossible for those burghers to do anything except keep within their walls. They will make no attempt in the face of the capture of this city and the presence of five or six thousand men in the vicinity. You are needlessly alarmed."

"Perhaps; but you do not know the man who is at the head of affairs now. It is no Philip Thanner, and of his ability and courage, I have reason to know." Lucretia dropped her head on her bosom, as if in thought.

"You seem to have regrets that are unworthy of your calibre," said D'Arville, as he moved nearer to Lucretia. He took her hand in his and pressed it gently. He continued :

"Have no fear. We shall be moving on to that tight little stronghold as soon as our own arrangements are perfected, and instead of awaiting an attack we shall seek the lion in his den. We may find friends in Villingen as we found them in Rothweil who may bite from within. At any rate, we shall try conclusions with the new pet of Vienna soon."

Lucretia gave a sudden start and clasped both of D'Arville's hands in hers. She gave him a radiant smile and brought her face close to his. She was greatly agitated as she looked steadily into his eyes.

"Do you think it possible to capture him? Do you think we can take the city by assault? Would it not be easier to succeed if he were out of the way?"

She asked these questions quickly and without waiting for a reply to any of them, continued:

"Ah, what would I not give to see that proud and haughty man humbled and tortured, to see that cursed town torn to its foundations, to have a voice in the fate of some of its people. She raised her hands and clasped them together until her nails nearly drew the blood from the white skin.

D'Arville looked at her with a grim smile. He knew her history and her undying hatred of Gerold von Ebertus. He leaned over to her and took both her hands and said:

"What would you give to accomplish your wishes?"

"Give!" replied Lucretia, with a fierce, searching look; "anything! everything! my soul, yes, my hope of the future!"

Lucretia sprang up from the divan as she finished and walked rapidly to and fro. She calmed down gradually and after a few moments walked to the divan where D'Arville was still sitting. She smiled as she extended her hands to him. He gently drew her down and kissed her.

The curtains of the door were softly parted and the handsome, childlike face of a boy peered into the room at the moment Lucretia's and D'Arville's lips met. A surprised,

pained, and regretful look came over the face of the boy as he comprehended the situation. Quietly he drew the curtains together again and with uncertain steps he walked out of the ante-chamber through the rooms and over to the other wing of the house, where he spent most of his time in the company of Martha von Klutus and her daughter Amalia.

CHAPTER XII.

EGON VON EBERTUS.

EEGON VON EBERTUS, child though he was in thought and action, was really in his sixteenth year. He was handsome, graceful, and of good height and development for a boy of his years. His clear gray eyes and frank open countenance betokened kindness and tractability. While possessing some of his mother's features, inheriting her fine complexion and conformation of brow, he fortunately did not inherit her peculiar characteristics. To a boy of his tender years, many of the scenes of which he was an unwilling witness, struck deeply into his heart.

Lucretia, intent upon her manifold schemes and the oft-times irritating and abstracting complications which arose therefrom, had, nevertheless, managed to devote more or less attention to her son. While some of the methods to which she resorted were not conducive to the best interests of Egon's future and were only temporary expedients intended to conceal ulterior aims and hopes, she honestly and faithfully loved her son.

Truthful, kind-hearted, and sensitive, he lavished intense love and affection upon her. He possessed to a marked degree the qualities of soft-heartedness and unselfish devotion, yet his confiding nature was at times permeated with vague fear and timorous doubt. Self-reliance and manliness were imbued deeply in his character, which, added to a great

reverence and love for heroic deeds, argued most effectively for a strong and powerful personality. Egon knew in a vague way the differences that existed between his mother and father.

Lucretia persistently fostered the false impressions which she had instilled into his mind of Gerold's character and worth. No opportunity escaped her, not only to strengthen the false stories concerning Gerold's character and intellect to which she had accustomed her son, but to industriously invent new ones. Her sister Minerva, true to her natural propensities for perverting the truth and with the mock religious humility which was inseparable from her manner, invented the most improbable tales for her nephew's edification. To Egon's inexperienced mind, therefore, his father was a singular combination of ignorance, brutality, and fathomless dishonesty. Nor were the false stories which were coined by the mother and sister, without added weight or corroboration. His uncle, Werner von Klutus, cool, distant, and disdainful to the boy, condescended to friendliness, and unbosomed himself at times, only to sink the shafts of the bitter hatred he felt for Gerold deep into the guileless heart of the boy. Klutus took a sordid delight in driving home the wicked bolts of malice, and as the boy grew to years when his understanding was broadened and his sense of observation developed, he revelled in the pain and resentment he produced in Egon, and which naturally followed the rehearsal of some specially base story invented for his particular edification.

Wilhelm von Dougal corrected many of the tales which the boy carried to him and repeated with much detail, as did Martha von Klutus and her daughter, but the weight of evidence always went with the statements of his mother. The boy, however, naturally inclined to Von Dougal, and the preference was warmly reciprocated by the notary. Thus it happened that a great friendship grew out of the intercourse between Von Dougal and Egon, which was daily

strengthened as the boy developed. The fall of Rothweil, the desperate defence of Konrad von Horgen, and the cruel massacre of many of its soldiers and inhabitants, almost before his very eyes, made a most profound impression on the boy. The heroic effort of Wilhelm von Dougal and his riders filled his heart with a deep reverence for his kind and indulgent friend the notary.

It stirred the latent fires of boyish ardor and filled him with resentment against the invader. The very sight of a Swede or a Frenchman caused him to flush with anger. It was small wonder, therefore, that the scene between his mother and D'Arville, of which he was an unwilling witness, affected him deeply, and aroused fears and apprehensions of coming evil, or that he wandered aimlessly from the left wing of the prefecture with a sinking heart and a great lump in his throat.

But he resolutely forced down his feelings and knocked at the door of Martha von Klutus's living room. A pleasant voice from within bade him enter, and with another effort at self-control, he passed into the room.

"Good morning, my dear boy; how are you to-day?" said Madame Klutus.

"I am very well, thank you," said Egon, while a faint smile played about his lips.

"I came over to stay a while, if you don't mind."

"You are always very welcome, my child, as you know. I will call Amalia, and let her know that you are here. Make yourself at home."

The boy looked abstractedly around him. Everything was familiar enough about the room yet nothing seemed to be in its right place. The great tile stove with its carved walnut bench around three sides of it, the deep window sills with the sweet perfumed hyacinths, the old familiar pictures on the wall, the cuckoo clock with its quick, sharp ticking, the large oaken table and heavy, curiously carved chairs, the spinning wheel, the ceiling beams which sprung

across the room from the fancifully carved corbels and the numerous and varied objects, all were there, yet they seemed unreal and unfamiliar. He stood irresolute and again felt his heart sinking within him. He was on the point of breaking down when Amalia entered the room. She looked at him and immediately clasped him in her arms. Tenderly she kissed his brow and stroked his soft brown hair. Thus they remained for several minutes until the pent-up feelings of the boy found relief in weeping. Two large tears slowly coursed down his cheeks and the lump in his throat gradually swelled in size. With a convulsive action the boy threw both arms around Amalia and hiding his head on her bosom, sobbed as if his heart would break.

Amalia looked on the fair head with concern and gently led the boy to a large bench where they both sat down. Amalia pressed him close to her and smoothed his hair with her soft white hands.

"My darling boy, what is the trouble? Tell me, my poor child, what has happened. I never saw you give way like this. Tell me, my boy."

"Oh, nothing," said Egon, after a pause. "I feel badly to-day. I miss Herr von Dougal. I don't know whether he is alive or dead." The sobbing continued. Amalia was visibly affected by the boy's deep anguish. A pained expression came over her beautiful features and a tender light shone in her eyes.

"Yes, my child, you do miss Von Dougal. We all miss him, but you must not think him dead. He is undoubtedly alive, as he has escaped the Swedish and French riders thus far. He is a brave man, Egon, and made a desperate effort to save his friends. He has probably escaped to Villingen, and will bring tidings to them that will prepare them for the worst. Do you know, Egon, that your father, Gerold von Ebertus, has been made governor of this whole district by the King?"

The boy slowly lifted his head and looked into Amalia's

deep blue eyes. He rubbed the tears from his cheek and recovered himself gradually. After a while, he said, with a different look in his eyes :

“ What did the King appoint him for ? ”

“ Because he is the best man to appoint, and because he is true, brave, and a great soldier. My boy, you ought to be very proud of him. I wish I could be as proud of my father.”

Her bosom heaved as she said this. She closed her eyes and drew her lips tightly together.

“ Why do you say this, cousin Amalia ? Others don't say that he is brave and true. They say he is mean and rough, and treats everyone badly.”

“ Oh, Egon ! My boy, do not allow anyone to speak so of your father. He has been badly used by the nobles of Rothweil, and by your own uncle Werner, all owing to trouble which started years ago when you were a mere babe in arms. Herr Von Dougal told me the whole story, and also told me of the many years your father fought under the King afterwards, all over Europe. How he was promoted and honored, until a few years ago, when he went to Vienna and threw his sword at the King's feet and left the service because my father and his friends tried to ruin him. Egon, the King does not make a man governor in such times unless he is a superior man and greatly to be trusted.”

Egon listened intently to the story which Von Dougal had told him but a fortnight ago. He looked into the lovely eyes of Amalia as if to pierce their very depths.

“ Then you believe my father to be a good man, and all Herr von Dougal says of him ? ”

“ I do ; and I also believe he will undo this great wrong which our family has suffered the Swede to commit. If a man like your father had been in command of this city, it would not be in the enemy's hands to-day, and this horrible wretchedness, burning, and butchering would not have taken place.”

Egon's hands closed nervously and a strange light came into his eyes.

"What does my father look like, cousin Amalia?"

"I have never seen him, my child, but Von Dougal has described him often to me. He says he is slightly over the average height, broad-shouldered, straight and graceful. He has fine hazel eyes and a rather large nose. His features are fine and gentle when in repose, but terrible when angered. He is a great master-at-arms and a very learned man, being the friend of all the scholars in Southern Germany. He is a direct descendant of one of the most ancient families in the kingdom and is very rich. He is also a great friend of Carolus von Haisus, that handsome officer you liked so well, who was here about a month ago with despatches from Villingen."

Amalia blushed slightly as she mentioned Carolus's name, and a tender, yearning expression came into her eyes.

CHAPTER XIII.

HUGO PLANS AN ESCAPE.

ROTHWEIL was in a state of constant agitation. The rough and brutal treatment of its burghers and soldiers by the new masters inflamed the wrath of its inhabitants and kept them in a fever of excitement. Werner von Klutus, Arnoud Heilprin, and the others of the little coterie of conspirators kept well out of the sight and reach of the exasperated and maddened populace. A number of attacks were planned upon the prefecture by the burghers, but cooler counsel prevailed and extreme measures were not undertaken. Werner von Klutus and his precious associates therefore remained in the prefecture, which was protected by a double guard at all entrances to the building. Three hundred and forty men of Rothweil's soldiery were prisoners of war, and were held captive in the larger buildings about the walls. A few of the officers were given the freedom of the city, among whom were the imperial courier Frey and Hugo Westphal.

Immediately upon his release, Hugo sought and was allowed permission to see his wounded friend and companion Konrad von Horgen, who had received a musket ball in his left shoulder, while gallantly defending the south gate of the city on the eventful night when Wilhelm von Dougal and his friends made the desperate but unsuccessful attempt to succor him.

Konrad was safely harbored in his own home and was

carefully nursed by his aged mother and a spinster sister. Holm, the most noted surgeon in the Swedish division, attended him with unflagging zeal and constant devotion. The result of such extraordinary care was quickly apparent in the condition of the wounded man, who, though grievously injured, was already on the road to recovery.

The meeting of the friends was affecting, and while prudence forbade a free discussion of their feelings regarding the fall of their city, the determined expression of the eyes and the covert glances foreboded anything but quiet resignation to the present condition of things. The friends were not allowed to converse freely with each other and were closely watched by a sergeant who stood at the foot of the bed. Hugo saw that nothing could be accomplished at once, and soon took his departure. On arriving at his own home, he found, much to his surprise, the courier Frey awaiting him.

This active and restless man, who had had years of experience in campaigning and whose exploits in the wars against the Cossack, Tartar, and Turk were subjects of wonder and amazement among his fellows, had already conceived and was ready to carry out a plan of escape for himself and his men. He had seen the young officer of cuirassiers, and was so well pleased with him and the bravery he had exhibited that he determined to include him in his plan and secure his active co-operation. Nor did Frey calculate without great foresight. While it was a matter of comparative ease for him to see his way out of the city, it was another matter to escape the numerous bands of Swedish and French horsemen who were scouring the entire neighborhood. Hugo, with his intimate knowledge of the surrounding country, could be relied upon to evade the dangers which threatened them outside the city.

Frey, in his usual brisk and frank manner, laid the plan before Hugo without any loss of time, and bluntly asked him whether he could rely upon him to do his share of the work. He concluded as follows :

"I do not intend to be caged in this place any longer than I can help, and I do intend to go to Villingen with everyone of my men, just as I started out to do. My despatches are taken, and so am I, but I will go to Villingen and report just the same."

"Have you thought out well your plan of escape, and do you realize the penalty of failure and recapture?" asked Hugo.

A contemptuous smile played about Frey's mouth while his full dark eyes flashed with determination.

"Have I thought it out? Of course I have, and it will be mighty strange if I have lost my cunning by being rubbed up against the moustached Swede. I have outwitted the infidel Turk and the keen Cossack under far more trying circumstances, and I do not stop for the yellow-headed heretics, by God!"

"I will consent to accompany you if your plan seems feasible and likely to be a success," Hugo said, after a quiet but keen observation of the man.

"I thought you would," continued Frey, calmly. Now my plan is as follows:

"You know the barracks where my men are confined is apart from the other buildings and prisoners; being Austrians, they are looked upon as of more consequence than the citizen soldiers of the guilds. We are therefore in a part of the wall which has a passage to the roof. There are only two heavy doors between us and the top of the wall, and only one sentry or guard at each door. Our arms are all stacked in the outer room but an iron gate is between us and our tools. There are horses, a large number of them, just inside the south gate and our prisoners' quarters are within fifty paces of them. Four men guard the gate and they are asleep after midnight. We can hear their snores over in our quarters. My plan is this: I will take care of the guard in the ante-chamber and will agree to get my men through the doors to the top of the wall and outside the south gate. I

will also agree to take care of the sleeping gate-keepers, if you will secure the horses for us. I'll get out and open the gates, if you agree to get us the animals to carry us away. Is it an agreement?"

Frey looked at Hugo intently as if reading his inmost thoughts. Hugo sat on his chair and was abstractedly drumming upon the table with his fingers. After several moments' reflection, he stood up and extended his hand to Frey.

"I agree. I will see that the horses are ready, but you must send half a dozen men in through the gate after it is opened to take them, and quickly."

A broad grin spread over the face of the courier as he pressed Hugo's hand warmly.

"Do not let that worry you, I'll not only send half a dozen, but all of them to take the horses. You have them saddled and bridled; I'll attend to getting them. Now hear me carefully. The Falcon Inn is opposite the gate. The barns are alongside the inn. The corporal of the guard spends most of his time in the drinking-room, and generally is in a thick condition about midnight. I'll see that he is in good luck to-night, and also all others who may come in. I will keep them busy while you saddle the horses; then I will return to my quarters where my men are, and quiet the guard in the ante-room. We will arm and be ready for a signal. I will then return to the inn and stand by with you for any opposition we may find and be ready to receive our men who will be outside the wall. Be careful whom you trust with the horses. Everything depends on this. We will be powerless, if you fail to have them ready. If you wish to see me, I will be at the Falcon at ten o'clock to-night. It looks as if this rain would continue, and it will help us. The signal will be four sparks on the flint in the large window opposite the inn. If you are ready, answer by a like signal at the corner of the inn farthest from the barns. I will send my men up and over the wall and join you below.

Take a mace and a dagger with you ; no sabre, remember ! It will cause suspicion. Do we understand each other ? ”

“ Yes,” said Hugo, “ and you may depend upon me, absolutely. If anything should interfere with our plan regarding the horses, I will let you know in the drinking-room before you leave for your quarters.”

“ Very good. I will go to arrange matters.”

Frey wrapped his long military cloak well about him and throwing up his collar to conceal his features as much as possible, quietly took his leave.

Hugo was astounded at the cool and collected manner of the man and the daring he exhibited in the plan he proposed. He was likewise pleased at the prospect of release from surroundings that weighed heavily upon his patriotic and oppressed heart. He fully realized that it meant death if recaptured and possible revenge on others, who, though innocent of any complicity would be visited with the utmost harshness. Konrad von Horgen, especially, would be liable to suspicion, and while his condition precluded any possibility of active participation in the plot, he would, nevertheless, be suspected of knowledge of the affair.

Hugo was animated with the desire to warn and alarm his friends at Villingen. He also wished to convey the intelligence of the appointment of Gerold von Ebertus as governor of the district and produce the courier in proof of his statements. Naturally enough, Frey had only vague impressions of the despatches which he carried from Vienna, and could not accurately know their contents, but, from what he had gathered in his own peculiar way, he concluded that he must go to Villingen and report at all hazards, if for no other purpose than to alarm its garrison and carry the tidings of the fall of Rothweil.

Hugo sat in deep thought for several minutes after Frey departed, and revolved in his mind the part that fell to him. He calculated the chances of assistance, and while a number of men occurred to him, each and everyone of them lacked

needful qualities to carry the desperate plan to a successful issue. He suddenly straightened himself and quickly rose to his feet.

"Ha ! the very man," he said, half aloud, then began to walk quickly up and down the apartment.

"Daring, like his master, intelligent, and active,—the very man."

He left the apartment, and in a few minutes quietly walked to the southern end of the city.

Hugo cautiously avoided the principal streets and made several detours through alleys, always carefully watching that no one followed him. It was not yet noon. The cold, heavy rain of a dreary and chilly October day fell with a regular and monotonous sound on the roofs and pavements of the city. The projecting iron and copper gargoyles on the roofs spouted out steady streams of water. The streets and alleys resembled miniature rivulets, making travel extremely disagreeable. Few pedestrians ventured out and Hugo was therefore unobserved as he walked steadily through the intervening streets. His high military boots protected his feet and legs and an ample cloak enveloped his fine figure. He stopped before an unimposing house and knocked. A servant answered his inquiry for Madame von Dougal, and he was ushered into a well-furnished, spacious room. A bright, cheerful glow lighted up the apartment from a brisk wood fire that was burning in an immense fireplace.

Hugo laid aside his hat and cloak and strode to the fireplace to bask in the inviting warmth. In a few moments an elderly woman, of refined manners and appearance, walked into the apartment from an adjoining room. A faint smile of welcome lit up her face as she extended her hand to him.

"Good morning, my friend ; it is unusual for me to receive visitors since—" she paused and a pained expression passed over her face. She quickly recovered herself and asked :

"Have you tidings from my son Wilhelm ?" A look of expectancy changed to sorrow as she anticipated Hugo's reply.

"No, Madame, I have not heard from Wilhelm since the eventful night that robbed us of our freedom and our city."

"Be seated, Hugo," she said, as she sank into a large oaken chair before the fire.

"No tidings! Oh, where can my son be!" She clasped her hands and murmured an inarticulate prayer.

"Your son and my friend may be in Villingen safe and sound. Certain it is that he has not been captured, although large parties have been scouting for him nearly a week."

"Would to God your hopes prove true. My constant prayers go out to Him on high for the safety of my son."

"Do not be discouraged, my dear madame, but believe and trust in the resources of your son. He is an extraordinary man, and will surely evade his enemies. When I was knocked off my horse in the skirmish, I could see him still fighting like a demon, with a handful of men around him. He was not wounded nor slain, neither was he captured, therefore it is safe to presume he escaped."

A sigh of resignation escaped the troubled woman as she leaned back in her chair and looked absent-mindedly into the bright, snapping fire. The door of the room suddenly opened again and a graceful boy entered and walked unhesitatingly towards Madame von Dougal and Hugo.

"Do you know Egon, Hugo. He came this morning in all the rain to visit me, and to find out if I had heard anything from Wilhelm."

Hugo, surprised and somewhat put out at the interruption, rejoined:

"Oh, yes, I know Egon very well. This is a bad morning for you to be out, my boy."

"I don't mind that, Herr Hugo; I don't like my house since—" he stopped short and looked with a flushed countenance at the floor.

"Since what, Egon?" asked Hugo, as he looked at the boy with interest.

"Since these Swedes and French have come here; since

they are all over our house and killed Martinez and Konrad von Horgen's soldiers ; since they burned that part over there"—Egon pointed in the direction of the burnt portion of Rothweil ;—" or since they either killed or drove away Herr von Dougal. Ah, I wish I could go to him and be with him."

The fine face of the boy evinced deep emotion and excitement. It surprised Hugo and pleased him. Hugo looked at Madame von Dougal with a smile of approval. She turned proudly to the boy and said :

" Surely, Egon, you have inherited many of the fine qualities of your honored father, of which deep loyalty and devotion to a good cause are not the smallest. I am proud of you, my child, and I have great hopes of your future, if only you can be with those who will direct your life and lead it into the proper channels of honor and usefulness. Come here to me, Egon."

The boy went to the kind-hearted and sympathetic woman ; she folded him in her arms and stroked his soft, brown hair. Hugo looked intently at the boy as if revolving something of importance in his mind. He finally said to him :

" If you are so anxious to be with Herr von Dougal, why do you not go away and join your father ? If Herr von Dougal is alive, he is certainly with him. I am going to see him or know where he is within forty-eight hours."

Both Madame von Dougal and Egon looked with intense interest at Hugo. The woman rose from her chair and laid her hand on Hugo's shoulder.

" Do I understand you to intimate that you intend escaping from this city and joining our friends at Villingen ? "

" Yes ! " said Hugo, in a calm but decided tone.

Egon quietly rose from the chair into which he had curled himself when Madame von Dougal arose, and said in a firm but subdued voice :

" I am going with you, Herr Hugo."

" You, my boy ! You fail to understand the danger to

which I shall be exposed in attempting it. You would die of fright or be overcome with the hardships involved. No, do not think of it. You are safely taken care of, and under the protection of the Klutus family. Your mother will see that no danger threatens you, and besides you must not leave your mother in any such fashion."

"I am going with you, Herr Hugo," quietly rejoined Egon, "and I am not afraid of the danger. I can ride as well as most soldiers and I know the way to Villingen as well as anyone."

"It is no use, Egon. I cannot think of it. Madame von Dougal will bear me out," said Hugo, as he appealed to the woman.

"Herr Westphal is right. It would be a foolhardy thing for you to do, and I would seriously question his judgment in even considering it. But Hugo, what have you on your mind? You can safely trust me with any plan you may have."

Hugo looked at Egon as if questioning the advisability of saying anything before him. He quickly decided, however, to continue.

"It is for that purpose I came here this morning. Where is Franz?"

"I presume he is in the house or at the barn, caring for Wilhelm's horses. He pays more attention than ever to my son's horses, as he has an idea that they will be needed at any moment."

"Where is the barn where they are kept?" asked Hugo, as a hopeful idea flashed through his mind.

"At the Falcon Inn, opposite the south gate, scarcely two hundred paces from here; but why do you ask, Hugo?"

He did not answer her question, but asked quickly if Franz was in the house.

Madame von Dougal went to the adjoining room and rang a bell. She informed the servant that she wished to see Franz immediately. She returned to the room and told Hugo that she had sent for him.

Scarcely had she made the announcement to Hugo than a knock at the door and a command to enter brought the man into the room. Hugo rose at sight of Franz and extended his hand, bade him bring a chair and listen to what he had to say.

He explained to him what was wanted, also what had to be done, and did not conceal the extreme danger or the penalty for being concerned in the plot, if they failed. Franz listened with varying emotions, and when Hugo concluded, he jumped to his feet and with a face radiant with anticipation, said :

" Herr Westphal, you offer me a part which I had already planned myself. I intended to get away with Herr Wilhelm's three horses sooner or later and join him wherever he might be. Will I see to the horses ! You may stake your life on it that they will be ready."

" I knew that I was not mistaken in you, Franz, and I was certain that where the interests of your friend and your master lay, there you would unhesitatingly turn your face. It is a matter of great concern to him, to his city, his family, and all his friends. Your best judgment and coolest action are therefore not only required but absolutely necessary to carry out your plans. In order to decide definitely just what is best, I must know a few things in connection with the barn. First of all, tell me, have you been in the barn at night lately ?"

" Yes, Herr Westphal, I have been there every night since my master left," said Franz.

" Why, what took you there ?"

" Just this. Since the Swedes took the place, a number of horses have been stabled in the barn and two cavalrymen have had charge of them. The French Colonel took a great liking to my horses and seized them. You know what a fiery animal Heckler is, and that he won't allow anyone but Herr von Dougal or me to come near him. When the cavalrymen tried to clean him, he nearly killed one and



'I am going with you, Herr Hugo," quietly rejoined Egon, "and
I am not afraid of the danger." (Page 97.)

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broke the arm of the other who thought he knew something about horses. The result was that I was detailed to take care of five horses, including Herr von Dougal's three."

"What has this to do with being in the barn late at night?" again asked Hugo.

"I was going to tell you that I will not allow the cavalrymen to stay in the barn after I leave, so I stay until they go and then lock up the barn. I sometimes go back and make sure that everything is right before I retire."

"Excellent!" ejaculated Hugo. "Everything fits as if specially ordered."

Hugo was greatly pleased at the knowledge imparted by Franz. He walked up and down the apartment with a light step and smilingly rubbed his hands. After a turn or two, he stopped in front of Franz and said to him :

"You will be at the barn to-night and stay there until you are relieved by me. At half-past eleven, you will saddle up a dozen of the best horses in the barn, including Herr von Dougal's three. Arm yourself with such weapons as are easily concealed and have a few good swords or pikes handy, in case of need. See that the holsters are all filled and that all bits and stirrups are muffled with straw or hay to prevent suspicious jingling of the metal parts. When you hear a quick triple knock at the stable window, quietly slide the bolts and fetch out the horses as if your life depended on it. I will be at the stable door and ten or a dozen men will take the horses and mount them. Mount one yourself and follow us. Go on about your duties to-day and to-night, just as usual. If anything out of the ordinary takes place, inform me at ten o'clock at the lower end of the Falcon Inn, where I will be. Do not commence any work, saddling or bridling, until you are sure that the soldiers will not return to the barn. Do you understand perfectly?"

"I do, Herr Westphal, and you may depend on me, if I am alive, to carry out every word of your instructions," said Franz.

"Remember, and be skilful ; everything depends on getting the horses out at the proper time. You may go now, Franz, and God be with you."

Franz bowed respectfully and left the apartment.

can't make good wine run like water, and I can't bring it before the mugs are filled."

A loud roar greeted this reply.

"Good wine from his vinegar casks! Ha! ha!"

"Look at him! He looks as if he believed it himself. Good wine! Ha! ha! ha!"

"It's good enough for you," growled Klafter under his breath, as he laid the tankards on the table. "May it choke you!"

Olsen made a quick grab at his sword, as if to use it, but Klafter took a great bound backward to get out of the reach of the brawny Swede. In his haste, he fell over a chair and rolled over several times. His great, fat body made a ludicrous sight as he tumbled and tossed. His big feet raised up by the impetus of the movement and fall, looked like a pair of good sized cavalry shields. The sight was too much for the troopers and they shouted and roared with laughter till the howling wind and pelting rain against the windows were silenced. Olsen, to cap the climax, threw a full tankard of wine at the hapless host and the sour red liquid drenched his head and shoulders.

When the pandemonium was at its height, the door quietly opened and a tall, finely proportioned man entered. He was wrapped in a long military mantle and a slouched hat covered his head. The water was pouring in small streams from his hat and beard. He took one look at the group in the tavern, and a quiet smile lit up his furrowed face. He busied himself in shaking the water from his clothes and then smilingly bowed to the Swedish soldiers. The landlord scrambled to his feet, picked up the spilled tankard, which was not broken, and rubbed his elbow with the other hand. With an ugly look at the soldiers who were still laughing at him, he shambling behind his counter and eyed the newcomer. Frey, the courier—for it was he—looked apologetically at the host, then said smilingly:

"You must have had an accident, my good man. It is a

shame to waste all this good wine on such a beastly night."

"Good wine! Ha! ha! That's rich. Ha! ha!" shouted the corporal. "Where do you come from, to make such a speech?"

"Is the wine not good?" asked Frey, in a mild manner.

"Taste it and see! There is more grape juice in your hat and cloak than in a barrel of that swill," continued the corporal.

The troopers laughed at this sally, while they scanned the newcomer with blinking eyes.

"That's too bad, but why can't we have some good wine, landlord? I am wet and cold, and would like a little cheer of the right sort. Come landlord, bring us a drink of the best the house affords, and here is the pay for it."

Frey threw a silver piece on the counter and with a bow to the soldiers continued:

"If you will permit me, I will sit a few minutes with you until I am dry and warm." He looked carelessly at the corporal, and then at the men, seating himself with his back to the counter.

"Make yourself at home," said Olsen, as he gave his chair a shove to one side. "We always have room for one more, provided he pays the shot, eh, fellows?"

He leered at his companions and winked at the trooper next to him. The leer and wink were not lost on Frey, but he smilingly thanked them. Olsen braced his big head with his hand, and tried to look steadily at Frey. He stroked his enormous moustache with the other and in a voice, intended to impress the new arrival, he asked:

"Are you a burgher?"

"No," said Frey.

"Protestant?"

"No."

"Suabian?"

"No."

"German?"

"No."

"Then you must be an Austrian or a Swiss?" said Olsen in a positive manner.

"I am an Austrian," said Frey.

"What are you doing now?"

"Nothing."

"What do you intend to do?" continued the corporal, whose effort at impressiveness was rapidly degenerating into drunken stupidity. He hiccupped two or three times so hard that it nearly threw him off his equilibrium.

"I intend to drink some of the best wine I can get, if we ever get it," answered Frey, as he looked around for the landlord.

Olsen pulled himself together somewhat as the word "wine" was heard. He reached out, took his big horse-pistol and banged away on the table, until the windows rattled. Two of his companions started up from the table on which they were leaning their heads, as if shot, and rubbed their eyes. Just then Klafter appeared with two small pails and poured the contents into large measuring glasses. He grasped one of them and quickly shuffled to the corporal to stop his din.

"Here, corporal; here is a little of the good kind which I laid away. It is all I have, but the stranger paid for it in silver, so I brought it."

"You miserable dog, why did n't you bring it before?"

Olsen made a pass at Klafter with the butt of the pistol, but he managed to evade it.

"You have it now, have n't you? And it's all I have. Drink it and be glad to get it," retorted the landlord, as he again took up his position behind the counter.

Olsen turned to Frey, and in an unsteady voice said:

"Your health, stranger! Your health, I said," as he banged the pistol again on the table to enforce attention from his comrades. "Drink to the stranger's health, you drunken ruffians."

Thus admonished, they took up the mugs and drank deeply.

The fiery wine had its effect on the Swedes. The corporal, whose capacity was greater than the rest, became more and more boisterous, as fresh libations closely followed one another.

Frey, coolly and smilingly noted the effect, and when he was satisfied with the condition of the corporal and his guard, who were to go on duty at midnight he quietly withdrew from the tavern.

He remained several minutes outside of the inn and then walked quickly down the side alley, keeping a sharp lookout ahead. Behind a projecting corner of a buttressed wall, a man stood motionless and allowed him to pass without notice. Frey stood still a few feet farther on, and turned on him uncertain of his identity.

"Well?" asked Frey of the muffled figure. The man took a step out of the corner and said:

"Is it you, Frey?"

"Good," was all he answered, as he closely scrutinized Hugo.

"Now look out for the horses. Have you reliable help?"

"I have, and we are sure of the best horses in Rothweil."

"That is right. I will now go to my quarters and prepare things. Stand a little closer to the end of the street, there, where that low wall projects into the walk. The weather is so thick that you might not see the signal from here, although it is a good position."

Frey disappeared in the darkness and Hugo took up his post at the place indicated. Half an hour passed and nothing occurred save the shutting of doors and the barring of windows at the Falcon. Again all was still. Intently listening, watching, and straining his eyes to the utmost, Hugo thought he heard dull thuds and blows above the howling wind and streaming rain. The lights in the Austrian prisoners' quarters were suddenly extinguished and all was again

still save the monotonous sound of the wind and rain. Another quarter of an hour of extreme anxiety to Hugo passed. He leaned forward, grasping his steel and flint and was ready to answer the signal which came not. Minute after minute passed. No sign could he discern, no sound could he hear and an overwhelming alarm seized the solitary watcher at the wall.

Suddenly a sharp spark pierced the darkness, followed by another and yet two more. The signal was given. Hugo answered by a like signal and hastened through the darkness to the door of the barracks.

A grating sound of bolts and the door opened cautiously. Three men came out fully armed and accoutred. Frey stepped quickly to Hugo and handed him a sabre and pistol.

"Quick now for the guard," he said, as he hurried toward the south gate.

Hugo and the two Austrian soldiers swiftly followed in the footsteps of Frey and creeping along the base of the wall that led to the gate, soon reached the inner gate which was partly raised.

The security which the guard felt against attack from within the fortress, or, possibly, the strengthening of the guard by two additional soldiers, made the corporal careless of his duty.

The heavy barred gate was raised sufficiently for a soldier to crawl under with ease. Frey, sword in hand, was the first to slip under the heavy iron-spiked ends. Hugo and the two soldiers followed quickly. Frey made certain that no sentry was in the vault-like structure, by passing cautiously around all four sides of it. He then returned to the little party and in a whisper ordered the taller of the two Austrians to assist him in lowering the great gate. Slowly the huge portcullis dropped into the socket of masonry built for it. Frey then withdrew the crank from the wheel at his side and laid it in a projection of the structure, ordering his assistant to do likewise.

They were now free from all avenues of surprise from within the fortress, excepting the stone steps which led to the watch tower and buildings on the wall. These steps were inclosed by a stone balustrade or rampart and ended with a heavy iron gate at the street below and inside the wall. The keys of this small gate were in the hands of the guard on duty and the gate could not be opened from within except by special orders from headquarters.

Frey whispered to Hugo, telling him to take the tall Austrian and after reaching the guard-room door to allow no one to leave. He and the other soldier would creep to the top of the wall and silence the sentries above, after which they would return to them. Motioning to the soldier who was to accompany him, Frey softly commenced to mount the stone steps which led to the guard-room and continued to the top of the wall. Hugo waited several minutes to give Frey time to accomplish his errand and then quietly followed.

Step by step he ascended and reached the first landing without interruption. Nothing could be heard except the slow jarring of the huge outer gate of the south entrance, caused by the suction of the wind. They noiselessly crossed the stone floor of the landing and took positions on either side of the outer guard-room door. This was closed, but a thin streak of yellow light under the door, indicated to them that soldiers were within. Not a sound was heard, however, save the sighing wind which swept through the landing. With anxious hearts they waited for Frey's return, while they rested on their swords in the darkness at their point of vantage.

Minute after minute passed. The inactivity and uncertainty were weighing heavily upon Hugo's mind. The monotonous clanging of the great gate echoed through the building and seemed to urge by its motion the pent-up forces of the man. The uneasy shifting of the soldier opposite indicated feelings of anxiety in him, as well.

Ten minutes had elapsed since they took up their positions

and yet not a sound or sight of their confederates. Hugo was rapidly becoming alarmed and seriously thought of reconnoitering the upper landing and wall, when a shuffle of feet was heard. He whispered to the soldier and prepared for attack. The approaching steps gradually softened and a low "psht!" caused Hugo's heart to give a great bound. His name was quickly whispered, and Frey again reappeared with his trooper. He whispered again:

"Safe! Three of them out of the way. There is now no sentry on the walls. The corporal and four men are undoubtedly inside here. Attention! You and I and Ferdinand will go in. You," speaking to Hugo's companion, "guard the door and let no one out except over your dead body."

Frey softly raised the latch and pushed open the door. Grasping his huge sabre, he quickly entered, followed by Hugo. The sight which met their eyes caused them to stop involuntarily. Five men lay asleep on rough couches, while in the room beyond, which was also lighted with lanterns, three men appeared in addition. Frey took in the situation in a glance. He slipped quickly across the room, grasped the door and hurriedly yet quietly drew the bolt. He made a sign to the Austrian at the door to shut it and come in. As the soldier did so, he accidentally struck his sabre with a sharp clang against the stone wall and aroused two of the men. One of them comprehended the situation for he immediately rolled out of his couch and grasped a pike which rested against the wall close by his head. He shouted loudly and woke the others. He had barely reached the weapon when he was struck down by the big Austrian. Frey immediately brought down another with a couple of well-directed blows, when a great thud and rattle was heard at the door of the inner room. Two Swedes vaulted across the couches and grasping pikes, stood at bay in the corner of the room. The smaller Austrian was engaging a big Swedish soldier in the other corner. The two Swedes were backing

slowly to the door of the inner room, fighting desperately with their pikes. Frey, after a terrific lunge, succeeded in bringing down one of them. He had his helmet knocked off and barely escaped being disabled. The remaining Swede fought with desperation, and was nearly within reach of the door. Hugo saw the situation and glancing at the smaller Austrian, plainly saw that his big antagonist was more than his match. In a couple of passes, the Swedish soldier reached him and with a terrific blow felled the Austrian to the floor. Scarcely had he fallen, however, when Hugo stepped up to him. It was man to man and neither was armored. The sword play was magnificent. Passes, lunges, and parries followed quickly and neither could gain an advantage. The two lanterns hanging from the ceiling cast an uncertain light upon the struggling men. Hugo with his magnificent proportions and supple movements, the flash of his dark eyes, and the cluster of dark curls which fell down over his shoulders contrasted strikingly with the blue-eyed and yellow-haired Swede. Slowly and surely Hugo forced his antagonist into the corner. The superior quality of the man, and the iron muscles of the master-at-arms were telling. Desperately the Swede fought for his life, and gradually recognizing the superiority of the man before him, he struck out wildly, hoping to fell his antagonist by a chance blow. Hugo parried the tremendous blow and then brought his sabre down squarely upon the neck of the Swede, who fell like an ox beneath the sweep.

Hugo turned quickly to his confederates, in time to see Frey thrust and pin the pikeman to the door. With an expiring gasp, the Swede grasped the bolt and as he fell to the floor withdrew the heavy iron from its fastening more with the weight of his body than with the strength of his arm.

The tremendous form of the Swedish corporal bounded like a lion out of the opened door, followed by two men. Frey planted himself squarely in front of him, while the big Austrian, Ferdinand, with a terrific sweep, nearly cut off the head of the second man, before he could clear the door.

Hugo engaged the third and brought him down after a few passes.

A terrific combat now ensued between the courier and the corporal. Fearful curses and calls to arms came from the lips of the immense Swede. It was clear that while his strength and quickness were superior to the courier's, Frey excelled him at arms. One terrific stroke after another was parried, and twice the corporal barely escaped death. The Swede's red face was fairly alive with anger while his eyes blazed with ferocity. Frey, cool and collected, measured every move of his antagonist, and when the Swede made an extraordinary effort to conquer him, he quickly jumped to one side and cut him across the sword arm. With a cry of pain and despair, the corporal threw his sword at Frey and before the astounded courier could recover from the force of the blow, Olsen pinned him in his arms and threw him over a couch. Both men rolled over and over and fell between two couches. The Austrian, Ferdinand vainly tried to give Olsen a blow, but the movements of the two men were so swift, that Frey was in equal danger of receiving the thrust. Ferdinand shoved the couches aside with great force and grasped Olsen about the neck. His fingers sunk into the Swede's neck like a vice and in a few moments the corporal's grip relaxed on the courier. Ferdinand hung on and was gradually choking the life out of the man. With a tremendous effort, Frey broke away from the Swedish corporal, and shaking himself once or twice, rapidly crossed the room, picked up his sword and replaced his helmet. With a glance at the wounded Swedish soldier, he said :

" Kill him, Ferdinand. Bring Anton down with you and remain at the gate. Quick now, Herr Westphal, to open the gates."

He looked carefully around the walls of the room, then entered the inner room. An exclamation of delight escaped from him as he perceived a huge key hanging on a nail in the corner. He took it in his hand, and ran through the rooms and down the stairs followed by Hugo.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE ESCAPE FROM ROTHWEIL.

TO thrust the key into the enormous lock of the outer gate and draw the bolts was the work of a moment.

Fitting the hidden crank to the large iron levers, swinging back the angle braces outside of the doors, and fastening back the gates so that nothing should interfere with the exit, was quickly done. Frey advanced a few paces out of the gate and imitated the low howl of a homeless and hungry dog. This signal was almost immediately responded to and several armed men emerged from the darkness of the wall and gathered around the courier. Frey quickly ordered them to follow him. Again loosening the crank, he fitted it to the sockets, lifted the spiked inside gate, passed under, and gave orders to two men detailed for the purpose, to raise it to its full height.

The balance of the Austrians, with Hugo and Frey at their head, passed swiftly over the intervening space, past the now darkened Falcon Inn, and lined along the front of the great barn. Hugo tapped sharply on the shutters of the barn and waited with a quickly beating heart for the response. Seconds seemed like minutes but the grating of the bolts and sudden flinging open of the doors put all his fears at rest. Franz had been equal to the task imposed and came out of the barn, leading a horse with each hand.

Frey spoke in a low voice to Hugo and turning to his men, said :

“ Quick now ! Mount one horse and lead another, each of you, and be careful to walk the animals to the outside of the gate.”

Frey and Hugo each mounted one of the horses brought out by Franz, while the men noiselessly disappeared in the barn. Hugo instinctively felt in the saddle-bag and with a satisfied smile, gathered up his reins. Frey motioned him to follow, and together they slowly walked their horses a hundred paces up the main thoroughfare to reconnoitre. Scarcely had they ridden out of earshot, when the flash of torches, a half dozen or more, lit up the entrance to the south gate, while the clatter of horses' feet echoed through the square, above the wind and driving rain.

Both riders wheeled their horses in a flash, drew their sabres and urged their animals to top speed for the gate. Passing the open doors of the barn, Frey perceived their men scrambling into the saddle, while several were ahead of them, galloping to the relief of their comrades who were left to guard the gates.

“ Mount and charge ! To the gate, my children ! ” shouted Frey.

Frey and Hugo in the lead were followed by three men. Hoarse shouts, the clash of weapons and other sounds of conflict broke on their ears as they approached the gate.

The momentum of Frey, Hugo, and the men carried them through the soldiers that attempted to bar their way. At the sight of their leader, a great cry arose from the Austrians who had withdrawn into the vault between the gates, while four or five men kept the torch-bearers first to arrive at bay. Their numbers were, however, gradually being augmented by fresh arrivals from all sides, some with their mail on, others without head-covering or armor of any kind, evidently roused and ordered out without preparation.

A sharp, quick command in French sounded amid the con-

fusion, as half a dozen horsemen, fully accoutred and armed, pressed through the struggling foot folk to bar the advance of Frey, Hugo, and the men. The Austrians at the gate, now all mounted, saw the movement and spurring forward came to the relief of their leader and his comrades.

Frey, evidently intent upon extinguishing the torches, had struck down two of their bearers, when his attention was drawn to the horsemen. An officer, finely mounted, had cleared the space in front of him, and with sabre poised aloft, dashed at the courier and Hugo with full speed.

Hugo was between the officer and the courier and wheeled his horse with a great effort to meet the attack. A hard sweep of the officer's sabre was neatly parried and the furious onslaught was checked. Hugo instantly assumed the aggressive and all but reached his wary antagonist, who was now evidently fighting for time, as the foot-soldiers were crowding ahead at full speed to the relief of the mounted men who were clearly overmatched in numbers.

The approaching torch-bearers increased the light to a certain degree and while the wind at times blew the lights into small compass, they would now and again flare up in brilliancy. Hugo backed his horse, step by step to the gate while his flashing eyes were bent upon the slowly advancing horsemen. Frey and his horsemen, meanwhile, were fighting furiously with the other mounted men. Two of them were knocked out of the saddle, while a third brought down two Austrians in as many strokes.

This man, an officer, apparently, fought like a fiend incarnate, and after despatching two of the courier's men, made straight for Frey. With a rapid glance at Hugo and the advancing foot-soldiers, the courier took an extra grip of his great sabre and after a sharp parry, lunged with his full weight at the officer. He passed his guard, and thrust him clear through the body. With a fearful curse, Arnoud Heilprin, for it was he, threw his arms upward and fell out of his saddle, a corpse.



The courier lunged with his full weight at the officer. He passed his guard and thrust him clear through the body. (*Page 120.*)

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Frey, without taking a second look at the fallen man, spurred on to Hugo, who was hotly engaged with the French officer, D'Arville, and both were gradually being hemmed in by the pressing foot folk. The glare increased and the din was deafening. Loud shouts, deep curses, and the clash of arms, interspersed now and then by the sharp report of a pistol or musket, broke upon the night and echoed among the tall buildings of the square. Three of Frey's men fought back the foot-soldiers on one side, while two of the remaining five held the other side at bay. D'Arville was again pressing Hugo hotly and the duel waged without advantage to either horseman.

Frey, at this moment, broke upon the scene and struck with terrific force to the right and left, scattering the advancing foot-soldiers like chaff before the wind. A couple of pikemen rushed up behind Hugo as Frey reached them and with one sweep nearly cut one of them in two, but before he could again bring his sabre to bear, the other made a wicked thrust at Hugo's back and pierced him. Frey's sword came down again and it laid the pikeman's skull open like a split apple. Hugo swayed in his saddle, but Frey caught him about the waist with his left arm and faced D'Arville. With a wicked smile, the Frenchman measured his opportunity and quickly passed to the left of Frey, so that he might finish Hugo without any further ado.

A slight, youthful figure, mounted upon a coal-black, fiery charger, suddenly broke in upon the trio and pressed closely to Hugo's left side. With a quick look at Hugo, the horseman reined his steed and faced D'Arville, who was completely surprised at the sudden apparition. The horseman did not seem to be armed, and was clearly so over-matched that D'Arville hesitated with lowered sabre. Frey turned Hugo's horse, so that it faced the gate, while D'Arville and the newcomer wheeled likewise. This movement seemed to decide the French officer, for, with a quick command to the

soldiers who were now pressing on three sides of the group, he spurred his horse a few feet and raised his sabre to strike. The slight figure of the newcomer made a sudden movement and when D'Arville was almost within striking distance, the sharp flash and loud report of a pistol broke upon the group. D'Arville clasped his breast with a convulsive grasp and dropped his sabre to the pavement. His swaying form was desperately clinging to his plunging steed as Frey, at the top of his voice, ordered a retreat upon the gate. He grasped Hugo's bridle and said to him :

" Hold on for your life " and urged both horses at a gallop to the south gate.

The torches were still increasing, and the forms of running soldiers could be seen rapidly approaching the gates, to block and close them. Frey saw the danger and again his voice was heard above the clatter of horses' hoofs.

" Ride for your lives ! Close up the rear and sides ! Down on your horses ! Strike ! "

Again the rattle of sabres rung above the din upon a thin rank of pikemen who had almost gained the exit. A number of the soldiers were struck down and another horseman dropped from the saddle as they passed like a whirlwind through the gate and out of the fortress.

After riding a few hundred yards, the command to halt was given.

" Seven only ! " said Frey as he rapidly counted his men. He turned to Hugo.

" Can you hold on ? Do you feel faint ? "

" Not very, only a little dizzy. "

" Good ; keep on until we get farther away. " Turning to one of his horsemen, he said :

" Where are Ferdinand and Anton ? "

" They went out of the gate mounted on one horse when the alarm was given, " said the man.

" Good. You three men stay here with me and you also, " said Frey, pointing to Franz, " the others go to the

Neckar Ford and wait for us. Remember the signal and keep a sharp lookout."

Frey wheeled, spoke to the men, and ordered a return toward the gate again. Quietly they walked their horses, keeping on the extreme outer edge of the road. They could see the light of the torches and follow the movements of the bearers as they trailed in and out of the gate and passed along the base of the wall.

"Attention!" suddenly commanded Frey, as the figures of horsemen blotted out the lights between them and the gate.

"You two," pointing them out, withdraw to the other side of the road, and let them pass. There are only one or two."

The advancing riders came swiftly along the road, their silhouettes expanding in size as they neared the hidden cavalcade. A hundred yards now intervened and it was plain that they were riding at a quick pace. They passed the two groups, when Frey's voice was heard clear and ringing upon the night air:

"Halt! Surrender!" Then turning to his companions, he shouted:

"After them! Ride!"

The first command was obeyed, however, and the horsemen reined up their steed.

"Who is it?" asked one of them.

"We are friends."

The courier rode quickly up to the two riders with his sabre at rest and asked:

"Whose friends? Put up those swords if you are our friends, or we shall never find out whose friends you are."

"Thank God! It is I, Ferdinand, and Anton here behind me." Then turning to his comrade, who was perched up behind him, said:

"Do you hear, Anton, it is the captain?"

"So it is you, Ferdinand," said Frey, as he walked his

horse up to his trooper; "but who is the other?" continued Frey, as he peered intently into the face of the horseman.

"He got out the horses for us at the barn and helped me to mount Anton up here, Captain." Frey, satisfied that all was right, ordered the advance. Swinging into a gallop, he called Franz to his side again.

"We must make all possible speed for the ford now, and put leagues behind us and that damned hole before morning."

"Yes, Captain, we must make sure of our retreat. The Neckar is badly swollen from the heavy rain to-day and the ford will be dangerous enough to pass in the night," answered Franz.

Frey made no answer, but increased the gait of his horse. The plain about them was soggy from the rain, and the mud flew in chunks under the swiftly moving horses' feet. They pressed onward, led by Franz and the captain, and in a few minutes were close to the ford.

"Halt!" commanded Frey. He again gave the peculiar howl of the dog and soon the answering signal came through the darkness. Frey spoke to Franz and asked him if he knew exactly about the ford, for the rushing water could be distinctly heard above the wind and rain.

"Yes," answered Franz, "I know it well, but Herr Hugo knows it still better, if he is able to give directions. He is thoroughly acquainted with every foot of ground for leagues about Rothweil, but why not wait until we have joined your men beyond?"

"That is simple enough. Forward!" A hundred yards of sharp trotting brought them to the ford. The howl of the dog was several times heard and answered and the advance guard joined the courier and their comrades.

"How are you, Herr Westphal? Are you able to ride?"

"Yes, my left arm and shoulder are bad, but I'll keep up just the same," said Hugo from among the group.

"Are you able to pilot us over the ford, Herr Westphal?" asked Frey.

"Yes ; if Franz will go ahead and lead as I tell him and you follow, we will make it, but you must tell your men to be careful. Go ahead Franz ; I follow. Now instruct your men to follow horse to horse, and do not lose sight of the man ahead. Keep close together, one at a time, careful now."

Franz plunged into the raging stream, whose usually placid surface was swollen with the accumulations of the entire water-shed to the south of Rothweil. The water surged and swirled in great circles and seething waves as it rushed over the shallow ford. It was a dangerous and trying crossing, but after a few minutes of extraordinary effort and several narrow escapes, the whole troop passed safely to the other side.

"We are now fairly safe from immediate pursuit, for few soldiers in Rothweil would dare to breast that torrent without a guide and there is no other crossing available except the bridge nearly two leagues from here. We shall keep on during the night, however, as we are almost certain to pass any of the Swedish cavalry without serious molestation. They will take very good care to keep under roof on a night like this," said Hugo to Frey in a low voice, for he was evidently in pain.

The little group trotted on, hour after hour, always headed southwest, passing through village after village blackened and destroyed by the invader who was now securely housed in the shelter of Rothweil.

As the night advanced gradually a change came in the weather. The rain stopped and the cold, cutting wind ceased, but the temperature dropped suddenly and caused great suffering to the wet and weary little party of horsemen. Several stops were made to rest the wounded men and to examine their bandages which had been made in the roughest and most primitive manner by one of the Austrian troopers, whose limited knowledge was gained by his years of campaigning. Anton, the wounded trooper, was gradually sinking and was now unable longer to ride on horseback,

although Ferdinand, his companion, placed him in the saddle and literally held him in place mile after mile.

After consultation with the captain, it was decided to stop at the next village, which was named Deislingen, and which had escaped the horror of fire and sword by paying a heavy ransom to the invaders. Onward the little cavalcade pressed and finally neared the village situated at the beginning of the foot-hills, which gradually sloped upward toward the west to the forest beyond.

The command to halt was given and the entire party ordered off the road to the shelter of the wood at the left. Frey, accompanied by Franz, advanced cautiously for several hundred yards to the outskirts of the village. Here they took to the fields and passed around the outside until they reached the extreme end of it.

Franz advised that he, should be allowed to apply at one of the larger houses for food and shelter, as the appearance of a soldier might cause alarm and lead to serious consequences, particularly if its occupants were hostile through fear of the Swedish riders who were scouring around the entire vicinity of Rothweil. Frey acknowledged the wisdom of the advice, and rode behind an out-building while Franz boldly advanced to the principal door of the house.

A loud knock, repeated several times, finally brought someone to the window above and as the casement opened, a man asked in a surly voice, what was wanted.

"Dress yourself quickly and come down. I have something to say to you that will be of enough interest. Fear not, for I am a friend."

The man looked dubiously at the horseman below, but after carefully scrutinizing him, in the half-darkness, said :

"I will come down in a few minutes."

"Hurry, do not lose time," answered Franz.

The casement closed, and the man disappeared. Franz waited patiently, and after making a sign to the captain, dismounted and stood at the door, holding his horse.

After what seemed an interminable delay, the door was unbolted and the man appeared in the doorway.

"Good morning, neighbor. I am here to request food and sustenance for a dozen riders and horses. We shall pay you well for the trouble we put you to and are peaceably inclined, but we must have what I ask for—peaceably if we can, forcibly, if you will not. Which shall it be?" said Franz, as he threw the reins of his horse to Frey, who had joined him at this moment.

The man was completely taken aback at the unusual request or demand made so early in the morning, but as Franz entered the doorway, to enforce an answer, he quickly made up his mind.

"What are you, Swedes or French?" he asked.

"Neither, and it matters little to you so long as we get something to eat for ourselves and horses and pay for it," interrupted Frey, as he entered the doorway. Then turning to Franz, the captain said:

"Mount and bring them here by the same road; put the horses in the stables and bring the men here. I will attend to the rest."

Franz mounted, and hurried back to the little wood where the fugitives were concealed.

"Now my good man, listen carefully to what I ask of you. Are there any Swedes or French riders in this village?"

"No; I have seen none since the day before yesterday," answered the peasant.

"Which way did they go?"

"Towards the west, to Mönchweiler, I think. It was a party of about three dozen, and they stole some sheep and a cow before they left the village," said the peasant.

"Good. Now hear me. Start your fires quickly; I will go with you; wait for me."

Frey tied his horse to a post and followed the man to the kitchen.

"Prepare something warm for a dozen men and put up a

quantity of food for the same number of men and horses to take with us. Act honestly and fairly, be quiet, hold your tongue, and you will be suitably rewarded for your pains. If you do not, and show the least sign of treachery while we are here, we will treat you liberally with this, and start a fine blaze for you to keep warm over for a couple of hours at least," said Frey, as he tapped his sabre and indicated the house with his thumb, as the object for the fire. Continuing he asked :

" How many men are there in this house ? "

" Two helpers, three women, and five children," answered the peasant, as he briskly prepared the fire in the kitchen.

" Are you a believer in the true faith ? "

The peasant looked inquiringly at the soldier, and answered with listlessness :

" What difference does it make, if you get what you want ? "

Frey looked sharply at the man whose coarse face was lighted by the flames of the brightly burning fire which had been started and said nothing.

" You remain here and get everything ready before you awaken any of your men. After my riders come, you are to get them up, but keep all the women and children away. Do you understand ? "

" Yes," said the peasant, as he busied himself with a huge kettle and other kitchen utensils.

Frey walked to the front door and listened intently for the approach of the riders. He had not long to wait, for a number of mounted men emerged out of the half-darkness and walked their horses boldly up the path that led to the front door.

" Franz, go to the back of the house and stay close to the peasant."

He then turned to his men and ordered them to assist the wounded men to alight. Then to lead their horses to the large barn a hundred yards in the rear of the house.

Ferdinand, the tall trooper, came to the captain and told him in a low tone that Anton, his comrade, had died shortly after Frey left with Franz to reconnoitre, and that they had left his body in the little wood, taking, however, his arms and all his little effects with them.

Frey dropped his eyes for a moment and compressed his lips. He rallied and helped Hugo into the house. As he led him into a room and prepared a soft seat for him, he asked :

"How are you, Herr Westphal?"

"Very sore, my dear Captain. Had it not been for the light steel jacket which I put on under my doublet, it would have been my death stroke. As it is, I can hardly use my left arm and my back feels as if it were cut off entirely."

"Sit here until I come back, and I will examine you myself."

Frey left the room to give further orders.

In a few moments a lad entered the room with a rush light and drew a table up to the bench where Hugo was lying. The young man used his hat to protect the weak light as he advanced and turned his back to Hugo as he moved the table close to him. Hugo looked at the lad, but his numbness and pain caused him to again turn his face away from the intruder. As the light burned more steadily, the young man flung his hat and mantle aside and approached the wounded man. He looked steadily at him as Hugo with closed eyes lay quietly on the bench. The youth's soft gray eyes melted with great sympathy as he fell upon his knees and gently touched the shoulder of the injured soldier.

Hugo opened his eyes and partly turned his head, as he felt the touch. With a look of amazement, incredulity, and wonder, he exclaimed :

"My God, Egon! Where do you come from? Is it possible or am I dreaming?" said Hugo as he sat upright on his bench.

"I am Egon and have been with you ever since you were wounded at the south gate at Rothweil."

Hugo could not answer. His amazement had made him speechless. He looked on the boy as if he were an apparition. Rubbing his eyes, he stared at him for several moments and then the events of the night rapidly passed through his mind. Without a word he lay back on the bench and closed his eyes.

Egon gazed at him with compassion and then laid his hand on Hugo's shoulder.

"The captain said he wanted to examine your wound. I will undress you and help him that much, as it will save time."

Hugo turned again to the youth and as he opened his eyes, by the weak light of the rush Egon saw two large tears rolling from his eyes. Hugo raised his right hand and encircling the youth's neck, drew his face down to his and kissed his cheek. He looked steadily at the boy and after a few moments said :

"It all comes back to me, now. You are the one who shot that miserable hound D'Arville, when he was about to despatch me, and you are the one who rode so closely by my left side to protect me as we fled through the gate. Ah ! Madame von Dougal was right. You are an extraordinary boy."

He closed his eyes again and soft lines came across his face. He then resumed :

"You did go out with me. You did accompany me, just as you said you would. You are a brave boy. Tell me how you managed it."

"Never mind now, Herr Hugo. Let me loosen your clothes and dry them while the captain examines the wound."

Egon removed the mantle, steel collar and leather doublet and took them out to the kitchen, where the group were watching the cheery preparations for breakfast.

The horses had been taken to the barn, rubbed down and fed and a guard placed over them. Daylight was gradually

breaking and the rifts in the cold clouds betokened a clear if not a bright day.

Frey had ordered Franz to watch the road and this trusty man, cold, wet, and wearied, kept his post, mounted on the beautiful charger which he had taken such pains to keep in the pink of condition. He looked at his horse every few minutes and lamented his dirty and bedraggled condition. Gladly would he have gone without food and suffered additional exposure himself, if he could only have time to brush, clean, and feed the horse upon which, aside from his master, his entire affections were bestowed. He sat there in an angle, from which he could observe the road, patting his horse's neck, and picking the clots of mud out of his mane. He kept up a constant conversation with the steed and promised him the most luscious mouthfuls and a fine dressing as soon as he was relieved. The gallant steed pricked his ears and pawed the earth, every now and then giving a soft neigh as though he understood his keeper's conversation.

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As the refugees were resting and refreshing themselves and their steeds for their further journey, danger was rapidly nearing. Three leagues away toward Rothweil, a strong party of cavalry was flying across the country west of Horgen. Sullenly and steadily the troopers urged their horses and at their head were a dozen figures closely muffled up for protection against the biting cold which was increasing as the morning broke.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE PURSUIT.

FREY urged the peasant to hurry with the meal, while the two men belonging to the household brought and packed up such provisions as could be handily found for the men, and provender enough for the horses for a day's journey. The captain had Franz relieved by Ferdinand and two troopers, who stood on guard after a scanty meal. The men were all finally satisfied with a hasty meal of coarse bread and a bowl of thick pea soup and were ready to continue the flight to Villingen and safety.

Franz had satisfied himself that Hugo's wound was more painful than dangerous, and while the thrust had penetrated the slight armor and cut the flesh, it was more the contusion than the cut that incapacitated Hugo. Warm applications were made and healing herbs were bandaged over the wound and the sufferer was made fairly comfortable.

The peasant and his men were rewarded suitably for their attention. It was such an unusual matter for travelling companies to pay anything for food or sustenance, that the poor people could scarcely believe their eyes when a goodly-sized gold piece was slipped into their hands, on parting, by a mere shaveling. With bared heads all three of the peasants stood at the edge of the road as they bade their mysterious visitors "God-speed."

The whole cavalcade was again ready to start and continue on the road to Schwenningen to gain the forest instead

of due west to Mönchweiler. The information given by the peasant had changed Frey's plan and he determined to leave the plain before him, bearing more to the south to skirt the foot-hills of the Baar. Again crossing the Neckar, they held south, passing over rougher country and following well the headwaters of the Neckar.

Gradually the land lifted and in an hour's time they reached an elevation sufficiently high to get an unobstructed view of the entire country around Deislingen. The first gleams of the morning sun pierced the cold, dark clouds, which still hung low on the eastern horizon.

The fugitives pressed on and a feeling akin to cheerfulness took possession of the little party. Frey, who several times wondered at the self-possession of the lad in their midst, had heard the remarkable manner in which the youth had joined the party.

Franz had disclosed the whole story to Ferdinand, and he in turn gave a graphic account of Egon's part in the escape.

From Hugo he learned the boy's identity, and when all the links were joined, he marvelled not only at the persistency, but at the bravery displayed by one so young in facing the dangers through which they were passing. The old campaigner was drawn to the youth by an irresistible power, and surveyed his graceful figure as he rode near the head of the party, mounted on one of Wilhelm von Dougal's most beautiful horses, with increasing satisfaction and delight.

The captain with Franz and two troopers broke into a swinging gallop and passed the head of their line to gain the summit from which an uninterrupted view of several leagues could be commanded. Franz gained the point first.

With a gesture of alarm he instantly wheeled his mettlesome horse and galloped rapidly back to Frey and his soldiers, motioning them with uplifted right hand to wheel and return over the road they had been following. Without waiting for an explanation, Frey ordered his men back and

together they galloped to join the others who were just coming into view around the bend of the rough road below.

They came within a hundred yards of the little party when Franz dashed up to the courier, exclaiming :

"In God's name, quick behind the bend and through that wood upward. A large number of horsemen are within three hundred yards of the edge of the rise, coming this way."

Frey instantly halted and wheeled his entire party and in a few seconds they were flying through the wood and across a little knoll into the dense underbrush beyond. An order to dismount was given.

The courier directed his men to remain quiet and, placing Ferdinand in command, he quickly mounted and, motioning Franz to accompany him, cautiously led the way through the wood again. When they had nearly reached the top of the enormous projection which jutted to the edge of the road, they broke for the cover. Then he dismounted and quickly but carefully led his horse to within ten yards of the edge. He tied him to a sapling and told Franz to do likewise.

Slowly he crept to the edge concealed by the underbrush and lying flat, peered down upon the road.

He remained motionless for several minutes and looked intently below. Then he drew back and motioned Franz to come to him again and crept to the edge. Franz imitated the example of the courier and parting the dried autumn leaves looked down.

Stringing along in an irregular line, a large body of horsemen occupied the whole road from the foot of the projection upon which the two men were crouched, up to and apparently past the summit of the road where Franz had providentially discovered them.

A tall, fine-looking man was apparently in command and was surrounded by half a dozen subordinate officers, who were all riding in advance of the troop. The flag of Sweden

flapped at the lance-head of a trooper, while the standard of the recalcitrant and fickle Duke of Würtemberg floated from another lance-head.

"One hundred and fifty, if there is one," whispered Frey, as he scanned the soldiers, scarcely a hundred feet below them.

"At least," answered Franz. "See what we escaped!"

"The danger arose from my complete negligence. I'll have scouts out hereafter."

Frey stopped suddenly, and turning to Franz, asked:

"Is there another road above running parallel or joining the road below, to the south or southwest of here?"

"I do not know. Perhaps Herr Westphal knows. Why?"

"Because I don't like to double on an enemy's track. I would rather take another road for a few leagues at least," answered Frey.

The last of the troop had now about passed the road, which as far as the summit was clear. The courier cautiously returned to his horse, mounted him and returned to the concealed party in the underbrush beyond the knoll. Scarcely had the fugitives again mounted their horses when the soft sound of a bugle broke on the morning air.

"Quick! Follow!" cried Frey, as he led the way upward between the road and the scraggy underbrush that extended to the summit of the slope.

"They have discovered the prints of our horses' feet, just as I feared, and we must get away and reach the road somewhere on the other side of the summit," he said to Franz.

The captain cast an anxious look behind him and noted with apparent relief that the whole party was following him. It was a rough, hard scramble up the sloping sides of the hill, always skirting the dense wood which lay between them and the road. The courier now saw plainly that they must cross a clear space of several hundred yards to gain the road, or

climb upward to a second line of the wood, the end of which might be difficult, dangerous, and perhaps impossible for mounted men. He quickly gave the word and with a swift gallop, the whole party rushed across the open ground. Franz again outstripped the riders and reached the edge of the wood ahead of them all.

He looked quickly up and down, and then galloped at full speed to the next turn, a quarter of a mile beyond, to reconnoître. The road tended downward from the point where the little party of fugitives again reached it and, moving along at a quick gait, they gradually neared Franz, who waited until they arrived.

The courier ordered one of his best mounted men to remain in the bend until they passed the loop, while he sent Franz ahead to the next turn. Again Franz dashed away upon his superb animal for the turn ahead, while the cavalcade followed at an easy gait.

A sharp whistle behind caused Frey to look in that direction. As he turned, he saw his trooper gallop rapidly toward them, motioning with his drawn sabre to proceed. Instantly the little band broke into full speed, and in a few moments joined Franz.

"Remain here, and see what is following," cried Frey as they passed him.

The trooper passed Franz in a few seconds and partly halted his horse.

"About a dozen horsemen are coming back over the road. I don't know whether they saw me or not. I did n't wait," said the man.

"Go ahead with the others ; I 'll stay and see," answered Franz, as he withdrew to the side of the road behind a projecting boulder.

He waited several minutes, but no one appeared in sight. He looked in the direction of his party, but they had passed the second loop. Franz remained impatiently waiting for several minutes more, anxious to see something, yet fearing

to behold the riders who were reported by the trooper to be doubling upon their tracks.

His suspense was increasing every moment and his eyes were strained upon the turn in the road, scarcely a quarter of a mile behind. Twice he decided to rush over the intervening distance and twice he concluded that it was best to obey orders. He looked upward at the sloping sides of the hill and then down upon the level ground which they were again gradually approaching, but no sign of life was visible in the bright morning sunshine.

Finally he concluded to return, after counting one hundred, in the custom of his people. One hundred was reeled off; then he concluded to count another hundred and still another hundred. With a sigh of relief, he passed again out upon the road and rapidly crossed the intervening spaces between the turns. At the end of a quarter of an hour he again discovered his party as they turned a long bend, a hundred feet below him, and soon rejoined them.

"I saw no one, although I waited a short thousand counts," said Franz, as he joined the courier.

"Good. Perhaps we shall meet no others. Those men have been riding all night, judging from their appearance and tired look."

They were now almost on the plateau again and but a short distance remained of the hill road. Again a trooper was sent ahead and Franz ordered to remain in the rear. Again the scout came to an abrupt halt and with an exclamation motioned the party to hurry onward.

They gained the point and away on the plain a bank of smoke moved over the plateau, and the burning buildings of a village could be distinctly seen in the distance. A few objects were seen to move across the meadows, apparently leading cattle. A shot or two echoed among the hills behind them.

The courier took in the situation at a glance.

"Forward!" he cried. "The murdering whelps are at it early, but we 'll take a hand."

"You, Herr Westphal, and the lad keep in the rear. Do not expose yourselves unnecessarily."

"To the village Ferdinand with four men, so! You come with me," motioning to the three others.

They left the road, and clearing the underbrush which intervened between them and the horsemen on the meadow, bore down upon them quickly. The marauders had discovered the soldiers and had thrown the ropes aside by which they were leading about a dozen cattle and spurring their horses, fled indiscriminately. Frey ordered his men to head them off, while he rode at terrific speed, straight upon the one that was behind. He caught up to him and after parrying a clumsy thrust, knocked him over with his sword. Without giving him a second thought, he made a dash at another, who reined in his horse and set his lance for the courier. A fierce pass was made at the captain, and only an iron hand and arm could have turned the lance's point. It passed him and the next moment the lancer was thrust nearly through the body. Frey grasped the bridle of the stricken man's horse and with a jerk, the animal threw his rider to the ground. The two troopers secured a third one and taking his arms, ordered him back to the village. They came up to Frey and turned the captive over to their captain.

"Ahead, you hound of hell," said Frey, as he brought the flat of his sword across the back of the captive. "We 'll teach you a lesson when we get over there." He pointed to the burning village.

In a few minutes they reached the village. Ferdinand, with a couple of captured robbers, was surrounded by a dozen infuriated villagers, who were armed with clubs, antiquated pikes, sickles, and scythes.

"There 's another wolf; tear him to pieces!" yelled a burly villager, as Frey and his prisoner came up to them.

"Slay! Kill!" cried the infuriated people.

"Hold!" said Frey, as he raised his hand.

"How many of these hounds are there?"

"About a dozen. They killed some of our women and children, and murdered half a dozen men who opposed them. Tear them limb from limb!"

"Slay! Kill! Burn them!"

"Take them and give them plenty of time to repent. The stake is the best thing for such devils. It is slow but sure."

The villagers grasped the wretches and in a few moments they were tied to the most convenient tree where faggots were placed about their feet. The coarse, brutal countenances of the captured ruffians displayed scarcely a trace of fear as they cursed their executioners with the most horrible oaths. The smoke curling around their bound forms, and the little licking flames that flared up above their feet seemed to frenzy the groups of villagers who were being augmented gradually by women and even children.

Hugo and Egon appeared on the scene at this moment and a few minutes later Franz also put in an appearance. The little group looked on the horrible scene with varying feelings, and when the flames leaped higher Hugo and the youth walked their horses away from the sickening spectacle.

The burning men at the stake howling in their terrible pain, the maddened villagers, and the frenzied executioners, whose awful revenge was accompanied by demoniacal cries, together with the blazing buildings against the background, made a horrible picture to behold. When the brutal execution was at its height, Frey ordered the party to advance. A wild yell, half of exultation, half of barbaric thanks, followed the retiring cavalcade as they passed around the burning and smouldering dorp.

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Meanwhile the pursuing column from Rothweil pushed on with unrelenting effort, passing over eminence and depression through field and forest, deserted village and farm, now

crossing a swift-flowing water-course, now and again over the flat, frozen country to avoid detours, but always pressing on and sparing neither horse nor rider.

At the head of the column rode an officer almost completely muffled to the brim of his sweeping felt hat by the enormous collar of his long, buff-colored military coat. His long and wide-topped riding boots and rapier, together with the fine quality of his uniform, stamped him as a man of more than ordinary importance.

He rode steadily on, exchanging but a few words with the man who accompanied him, and who was evidently a scout or guide. They had come to the Eschach River, and the officer looked hesitatingly across the divide upon which no road was visible.

"How now?" said the officer, as he turned to the man at his side.

"We must cross the stream, take the rise over there, and push onward nearly two leagues to Deislingen, where we can reach the road again. It saves nearly a league," answered the guide.

The officer said nothing, but boldly entered the water following the scout. He looked back at his command as he reached the opposite shore and, with a satisfied look, gazed ahead at the slight rise that intervened between the river and the plateau beyond. At the top of the rise he halted his horse and motioning to a couple of young officers to advance with the guide, awaited the column which was laboring up the low hillside. At the rear of a few dozen of finely mounted and caparisoned cavalymen, two women rode on small but heavily built horses. With a sweep of his hat, the officer bowed low upon his saddle, as he wheeled his horse and moved to the side of the younger of the two women. A faint smile played about the corners of his mouth as he addressed them:

"Not what you bargained for, ladies, but these cuts across country save us the ride over rough and partly frozen roads,

to say nothing of several leagues in distance. Deislingen is ahead and we should hear something of them there."

"Do not disturb yourself, Colonel, we can stand the rough work," said the younger woman with a quick glance at her companion. "Anything to catch up with and capture the kidnapping murderers."

A vicious and cruel light came into the eyes of the woman. With a jerk of her head and a quick movement of her right hand, she threw back the protecting flap of her hood and looked straight into the eyes of the officer.

"Did you say that you expected to meet a column under Bernhard Gultlingen?"

"I expect to meet him, Madame—that is, if he has not passed us on the road while we have been making cuts across country. He was to be at headquarters sometime to-day, and although it is early, he is probably on his way."

"How many men has he, Colonel?" said Lucretia, as she again looked into the officer's face.

The colonel gave her a quick searching look and after some hesitation, said :

"About one hundred and fifty men ; but why do you ask?"

"Oh, for no particular reason, only with a larger force I should feel safer as we near that hellish hole Villingen."

"Have no fear Madame. I have two hundred men, of whom nearly one hundred are D'Arville's best riders, anxious to avenge the murderous attempt on his life. Only a miracle saved him, but the attempt was just as dastardly as if he had paid the penalty of his rashness with his life. We must catch this Austrian demon and his crew at all hazards, and if possible," said the colonel with a slight bow, "your son."

Lucretia pressed her lips together, and a look of pain and anguish crossed her face. She bowed her head in silence and rode on up the rise. They gained the top and again the order to move forward was given. The column moved

swiftly across the plain and reached the village, as the first beams of the morning sun shot through the heavy banks of clouds which hovered on the eastern horizon.

Deislingen was awake and the villagers were busy with the early duties of the day, as the advance group of the column galloped into the principal street. The loud blare of the trumpets caused many a startled and anxious face to peer from behind the shutters of the houses. A few villagers who were on the street were roughly seized and brought before the colonel, but neither threats nor arguments elicited any information concerning the fugitives from them. The evident truthfulness of their statements that they had not seen Frey and his friends caused Colonel Rau considerable worry. He promptly ordered his heralds to pass through the village and summon all the inhabitants before him.

After a brief address, he again inquired if a party of horsemen had passed through the village early in the morning. Not a word was spoken by any one of the villagers, except their spokesman or chief, who assured the Swedish colonel that no strangers had passed through, except a party of horsemen who had passed west to Mönchweiler, the day previous.

"Very good. I take your word for it, but mark my words, if I find out that you have deceived me, I will return and set a red streamer through your houses as certainly as the sun rises."

"Forward!" Again the bugles sounded, and the column rapidly swept out of the village. They pressed on over the road toward Schwenningen, across the Neckar, and upward on the hill road.

A sharp bend, a couple of leagues westward of Deislingen, presented a fine stretch of country ahead. A quick and searching look was followed by an order to halt. Turning quickly to a lieutenant at his side, Rau said, pointing to a large party of horsemen on the plain:

"Forward with your file and a bugle, and find out who

it is. Use great care, and signal to us if friends, if not, return immediately. We shall keep on the road."

The small squad rapidly moved away, and was soon lost to view, as Rau moved his column up and behind a strip of forest to be out of view of the riders on the plain below.

Lucretia, with anxious fears, moved close to the colonel, who was engaged in a discussion with several officers. Every word they uttered was seized and absorbed with fierce interest.

"It cannot be a party of the enemy. It is too large to be so far away from cover. It must be Bernhard, and if it is he, we shall learn something of the state of affairs at the little burg over there," said the colonel, as he pointed westward, in the direction of Villingen.

"Quiet now," commanded Rau, "or we shall fail to hear the signal."

Anxiously and with strained ears, the little group of officers listened for sounds of the return of their scouting party. Minute after minute passed until Rau moved again into the open road to scan the plain. Lucretia followed him and sat motionless on her horse.

Rau eagerly swept his glances across the sunlit plain and followed with his gaze the horsemen stringing out on the lower road. Two horsemen could be seen approaching the principal group, and a short distance behind them were two others, while the balance of Rau's scouts remained partly hidden behind a strip of wood.

The advance guard of the main body halted and in a moment the soft tones of a bugle floated upward to the column on the hillside. It was the signal of inquiry. Promptly a fanfare of bugles answered from the larger body, and then the two horsemen were seen to gallop rapidly forward and join the party. Another blast floated upward on the still morning air and then Colonel Rau ordered his column to join the horsemen below.

Both parties, moving rapidly, joined each other in the

course of a short quarter of an hour. Colonel Rau rode in advance of his troop and saluted Bernhard von Gultlingen. Questions and answers were quickly exchanged, and in a few minutes the united forces broke into a swinging pace back over the long road along which Bernhard had come.

The column, augmented by the finely mounted riders of Von Gultlingen, made an imposing show, despite the mud-stained and bedraggled appearance of each individual rider. The guide ahead, followed by Rau, Bernhard, and a number of subalterns, with the standard-bearers closely following, took up the road across the plain towards Peterzell and Mönchweiler.

CHAPTER XVIII.

GEROLD VON EBERTUS'S HOUSE.

IN the general sitting-room of Gerold von Ebertus's house in Villingen, a bustling scene was taking place. Servants arrived and departed, their faces radiant with smiles and flushed with suppressed excitement. There were no dragging footsteps in the corridors and the errands which they flew to perform were evidently more of a pleasure than a duty.

Kuno, the elderly personal attendant of Sir Gerold, was the busiest of all. He rummaged in old and deep chests, brought forth heaps of gala attire, which he had been wont to handle in years gone by, but which had lain, carefully cleaned, in the wardrobes for several years past. The voluntary retirement of his master from active military life had for years precluded the use of the finery, upon which Kuno had lavished much careful attention and kept in such perfect order.

He held up to the gaze of two female servants the particular dress which he judged would be most appropriate to the occasion and smilingly enlarged upon the beauty and fitness of his choice.

"I tell you, Emeline," said he, addressing the younger of the women, "one can be proud of such a master when he is clothed, as becomes his station, in these garments. Quite a difference between this and the black clothes he has worn these last few years, eh?"

An exclamation of delight and approval greeted Kuno's remarks. The younger woman Emeline whispered into the ear of the older servant, and then with a roguish look in her eyes, she turned to Kuno and asked :

"But what does the master wear with this lovely hat, coat, and breeches? Anything on his feet?"

"You ninny, of course he does. Look at these fine stockings and then at the shoes," answered Kuno, as he reached into a large chest and brought out the various articles of habiliment.

"Then here, in addition, is the sword to match the suit, and here is the hat. Look at these magnificent swaying red plumes and look at the texture of the hat. Ah! well do I remember taking these things out of their chest when Sir Gerold went to Vienna to see the king. He wore them when he faced his monarch, and I doubt whether a more striking looking man than Sir Gerold, ever stood before his Majesty. Everything is here except the chain—that golden chain which he drew from his neck and threw at the king's feet. Perhaps that, too, will come back now. I tell you, women, there will be no prouder man in Villingen than old Kuno when Sir Gerold stands again in the lofty place where he belongs and wears again these fine clothes."

Kuno affectionately stroked the garments and laid them carefully, piece by piece, upon the long and wide window seat. Then he hurried the women out of the room and locked it.

In an adjoining room three women were busily occupied in discussing the stirring events of the morning. One, an elderly woman apparently over sixty years of age, with a refined face and noble brow, was clad in mourning. Her sweet yet strong features were crowned with a wealth of white hair, while her fluted, black, three-cornered cap contrasted strikingly with her clear complexion and snowy hair. She was slightly above the medium height, and walked up and down the apartment with a firm step.

"Anna, my dear, you must wear your best things to-day, for this is a day I never expected to live to see. Justice is slow at times, but it is sure, and now after years of expectation, after years of prayers that my son be accorded his rights and his just honors, it comes like a welcome morning after a long night of sorrow."

"Oh! dear aunt, I am so overwhelmed by the glad tidings of cousin's reinstatement that I can scarcely keep quiet enough to think. Think of the ceremony! Think of the crowds, the soldiers in parade, the gala attire of the city, but think also of the satisfaction it must be to Gerold to know that his enemies have been vanquished and his character and worth, his lofty attainments and brilliant services to his country and his king recognized by this worthy appointment. Oh, I am delighted, and I wish I were a man, I do!"

"Anna, you are indeed pleased. I am glad of it. Put on your best gown. We must celebrate this event by a brave show of finery. All of us, and you, too, Bertha," said Madame Berlich von Ebertus, mother of Sir Gerold.

Bertha, grave and quiet, but pleased, smiled gently upon Madame von Ebertus as she was addressed. She replied in a low, sweet voice, as she rose from the deep chair and quietly linked her arm with that of Madame von Ebertus:

"Honors are scarce enough in this world, and when, in such dark times of cruelty and wickedness, the light of one man's life shines forth with clear burning flame, casting its radiance not only upon himself, but illuminating the hidden lives of those around him, and starting into freer life the loftier impulses of his fellow-men, who would not countenance such an event, hail with joy such a man and give him the aid he expects and desires?"

Madame von Ebertus was visibly touched by the glowing words of Bertha. She took her into her arms and kissed her fair brow. Bertha, confused at her outburst of feeling, blushed to the roots of her wavy brown hair, while her long lashes closed over her soft and dreamy eyes. Her whole de-

meanor was that of pained consciousness of an indiscretion. She recovered herself with an effort and with assumed gaiety talked rapidly with Anna.

"What shall I wear, Anna? Something appropriate and becoming. I will leave it entirely to you, my child. Quick now, for we have none too much time, and I purpose to dress for dinner to-day."

"The green velvet dress, with the lovely gold ornaments. The long train and the long sleeves. You look finely in that dress, Bertha. You look like a queen in that. You wore it some years ago, but I can see it to-day," answered Anna.

"You were younger, then, a child almost, and I was younger, too, Anna. You are a grown woman, now, and I—I am growing older, older." Bertha repeated the last word almost with a sigh.

Bertha could well have dispensed with the allusions to age, for there was nothing in her looks that savored of decline and decay. She was not strikingly beautiful, but her features were classically regular. She had a face and head that would bear close criticism from the artist's standpoint. A broad brow, delicately curved eyebrows, large violet eyes, a straight nose, and a most exquisitely formed mouth and chin were the salient characteristics of her face. Her long, brown hair was coiled into two large curls which fell on each side of her face and down over her bosom, in addition to the large knot gathered at the back of her head, in the fashion of the time. Her figure was trim and lithe, and her whole appearance indicated health and strength. As she stood before Anna, she clasped her hands and looked at the younger woman with a far-off look, that seemed to bring merriment to the lively ward of Madame von Ebertus.

"Oh, yes! You are the oldest woman I know of. You are surely declining both in looks and health. I am so sorry for you my old, old friend. But enough of this, I shall accompany you to your house, and bring you back with me, my queen."

Anna made a pretty bow, and then broke into a fit of merry laughter. Turning to Madame von Ebertus, she said :

" You will excuse us, but if I do not go with Bertha, she will not be ready and I have my mind made up on that green velvet dress."

" Certainly, my children, go at once, but be here in an hour and a half," said Madame von Ebertus, as she glanced at the dial of the tower through the window nearest her.

Bertha and Anna left the room and when the door was closed Madame von Ebertus cast a quick glance at the entrance, then clasped her hands as if in prayer. A soft light came into her eyes as she lifted them to heaven as if asking a blessing. Then with bowed head, she walked to the window and looked out upon the square.

" There they go,—the two loveliest girls in Villingen, bright, alert, good looking, but how different in nature," she mused to herself. " Anna, winsome, light-hearted, almost a child in thought and action ; Bertha, loving, serious, and sedate beyond her years. Let me see, Bertha is twenty-seven years old, eight years younger than her brother Carolus, yet one would believe she was forty to hear her talk. Yes, with the looks of twenty she has the seriousness of forty. It must not be. She shall not allow herself to grow into her years of thought. Strange girl ! What a depth of feeling she showed when she spoke of Gerold." Madame von Ebertus started suddenly and pressed her hands to her head. " No ! It cannot be ! It is merely imagination. It is impossible, it is absurd."

The elderly woman looked around the room as though afraid of her own thoughts. Gradually she recovered herself and an incredulous smile broke over her fine old face. She remained in the window corner, looking abstractedly at the moving crowds of people who were gathered together, discussing the events of the day and the pageant which was to take place during the afternoon. Holiday attire was

donned by many, and, as the crowds swelled in numbers, the peasant, the burgher, the artisan, soldier, and ecclesiastic were seen to mingle and exchange congratulations on the sudden and satisfactory turn which the strained relations that had separated them for months had taken. Not even the seriousness of their position, or the lamentable tidings of the fall of Rothweil dulled their joys of reconciliation and the relief from their municipal quarrels.

Madame von Ebertus noted the unusual and friendly greetings of former adversaries with a deep sense of pleasure and her thoughts wandered to the one lofty cause of the change. A quick knock at the door, and its simultaneous opening caused her to turn quickly away from the window. Gerold von Ebertus entered the room and closed the door.

"Gerold, my son!" she exclaimed as he quickly advanced to her, "God bless and watch over you."

Gerold put out his arms and folded his mother to his bosom. A glad look of happiness and deep affection shone from the eyes of mother and son. Lovingly the little white head rested upon the broad shoulders of the man and softly Gerold stroked his mother's snowy hair.

Thus they remained for some moments, each filling the measure of the other's world and oblivious to all else. The intense and consuming love of the mother and the devotion of the son were beautiful to behold. Well-nigh crushed by her husband's death, the noble woman recovered to lavish upon her son the love with which her beautiful nature was overflowing.

Madame von Ebertus had felt keenly the indignity which her son suffered at the hands of his sovereign through the dastardly and cruel machinations of his enemies, but she had met this trouble bravely and unflinchingly. The destruction of Gerold's home, and the consequent separation from her grandson, was a far more cruel and less easily sustained calamity. The natural love which she had for the boy was greatly intensified by pride of family and the thought that



Gerold put out his arms and folded his mother to his bosom.
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he was the last scion of their ancient race. Bitter and crushing was the catastrophe, therefore, which withdrew the lad from the good and ennobling influences of his father's protection and left him in the care of an unworthy mother. Under this weight of sorrow the proud old gentlewoman yielded, her hair quickly grew white and deep lines furrowed her cheeks and brow. But her love for Gerold triumphed in the end, and she rallied to strengthen and sustain him with her undying affection.

The lasting bonds of perfect understanding and of mutual respect and devotion between his mother and himself inspired in Gerold the loftiest thoughts and elevated his whole life. To his mother he credited the development of his nature, and he freely confided to her his inmost thoughts and hopes. Nothing was concealed from her, and well she repaid his confidence and trust.

Now in the face of the restitution of his ancient titles and honors, and on the eve of his triumph, the heart of the woman overflowed with happiness, love and gratification. Closely she nestled to her son's bosom, and clasped her arms around him.

"There is but one thing more, my mother, to complete my happiness and yours," said Gerold as he looked into her eyes.

"I know it, my son. God grant that this, too, may come to you and me. I cannot believe that the child's mind can remain forever turned from you, and I do believe that, with his advancing years and development, he will come to see things in their right light."

"I hope so. I am almost persuaded that it will be so. Oh, God!" said Gerold, as he suddenly left his mother and walked quickly to and fro, "can such things be? Can my son, the last of an ancient and noble family, be so perverted by evil influences as to blind himself against the clear and holy light of truth? Can hate, springing from the shameful abyss of sin, persuade a young and promising life into the

devious ways to which bad example points? Can I think longer with calmness upon the brood of evil-doers with whom he is sheltered, and who force him, my son, my flesh and blood, to be polluted by such surroundings? Violators of God's commandments, revelling in the sins which the Church abhors; their crowning shame of treachery to the Fatherland must incline my son's mind to me, if he inherit but a fraction of the nobility of our ancient house!

"Calmly, my mother, have I passed the years of separation upon the tented field, facing death in all its hideous aspects. Bravely have I looked forward to the time when reason and sense would influence my son to walk in the path of duty, honor, and righteousness. With resignation have I waited and watched for a sign of light, a heavenly beacon of hope, for the emancipation of my child from the thralldom of natural love for his mother, and yet it comes not. Oh, ye reasoners! Ye philosophers! Ye calm analyzers of men's thoughts and cold compilers of the residuary dregs of human emotion and longings; pore over your tomes as I have done, divert your thoughts into the fields of metaphysics, revel in the pages of half-forgotten history, and dwell upon the causes of human action—what does it all profit in the warm light of love, in the present, over-powering desire to clasp to one's heart the offspring upon whom one's whole life is centred?

"Ah, my mother, learning does but intensify the depth of one's misery after all. It brightens the mental vision and sets off the clear perspective of one's life, against which, memory, with unerring accuracy, draws in sharp angles the lines of painful longing and unfulfilled desire. Far better, perhaps, a life of action such as I am about to enter again, but oh, as I stand upon the brink, I shudder at the depths below me, the festering abyss of hate, revenge, brutality, and death. Yet, I am called, and I shall not be found wanting. I will lead by the help of God, as in years gone by, and do my duty to my king, my country, and myself."

Gerold recovered from his passionate outburst and stood

before his mother. With pained and working features, he concluded :

" But forgive me for making such a scene on the day when happiness and contentment should rule the hours. It was an unhappy outburst of feeling, which the crowning shame inflicted on me by my enemies and the enemies of my country brought forth."

Gerold turned to his mother with an appealing gesture, and his great heart throbbed as he saw two glistening tears course down his mother's cheeks. Again he clasped her to his bosom and comforted her—almost cheerfully, for such sudden and peculiar changes were part of the nature of the man, and said :

" A truce to feelings such as these. Let us enter into the joyful spirit of the hour, and by our example impart to those around us feelings of cheerfulness and security, despite the calamity which has fallen on the devoted heads of our friends at Rothweil." And then he added :

" Where are Anna and Bertha ? I half expected to find them with you."

" Anna accompanied Bertha to her house to dress more fittingly for dinner and to attend the ceremonies this afternoon. They will be back soon," answered Madame von Ebertus.

" Mother, did you notice the stranger who accompanied Carolus and Lumbas this morning, Wilhelm von Dougal, notary of Rothweil ? "

" Only as they crossed the square after they left the house. But why, my son ? "

" He has had a remarkable experience and is an extraordinary man. He has come to stay with us in Villingen, and will prove a useful man to us, unless I am greatly mistaken. I am strangely drawn to him, although I have seen him but once and under circumstances not best suited for weighing his character, but I am sure he is a man of great bravery. I am anxious to see him and hear how Egon is progressing,

for you know he lived under the same roof with the commandant at Rothweil and his family."

Gerold bit his lip and dropped his glance to the floor as he finished his explanation.

"Then, my son, let us surely invite him to remain after the ceremony this afternoon. I shall be as anxious as you to hear from his lips an account of the child."

Anna and Bertha entered the room unannounced and gave the conversation a new turn.

"Oh, Gerold, I am gratified beyond expression at the tidings brought to us this morning of the restoration to you of the titles of which you were deprived, and the added honor conferred on you of governor." As she said this, Anna ran to Gerold and grasped both his hands. Gerold bent over her fair head and kissed her brow, thanking her for the good wishes she expressed. Bertha extended her hand to him and in a few glowing words congratulated him likewise. A blush of deepest crimson overspread her features as Gerold took both her hands in his and kissed them.

"My dear friend, I have to thank your brother for the largest share in elevating me to the position to which I have been called and my gratitude flows out to him and to you, his sister. Accept my warmest thanks for your friendly assurances."

Madame von Ebertus looked keenly at Bertha, then at Gerold for a second, and then turning again to the dial on the tower, reminded her guests that it was the hour for the midday repast. Gerold offered Bertha his arm and Madame von Ebertus and Anna walked behind them, to the dining room.

"See how lovely Bertha looks in her green velvet dress. It is very becoming and she looks like a queen in it. Is she not old-looking?"

Anna emphasized her last sentence for Bertha's special benefit and accompanied the query with a merry, light-hearted laugh. Bertha looked partly around, and shook her

finger deprecatingly at the younger woman, but an inquiring smile lit up her features as she glanced into the eyes of Gerold at her side, as if challenging an answer from him to Anna's jesting question.

The household of Gerold von Ebertus sat down to a sumptuous repast in honor of the event of the day, and a merry party they made. After the meal had been disposed of, Gerold retired to his rooms to await the chief nobles, magistrates, and soldiers, while the women retired to their quarters.

Great preparations were being made in the large banquet hall below for the reception of the expected delegation. Upon the standards, armor, and weapons were hung flowing draperies, while the enormous, carved coat-of-arms at the extreme end of the large room was specially decorated with red, blue, gold, and silver streamers—the principal colors of the Ebertus family.

Beneath the coat of arms was located the dais, or raised platform, customary in ancient banquet halls, and upon this Gerold was to receive the formal notification of his elevation to the governorship.

Kuno, chief master of ceremonies, was almost overwhelmed with the numerous duties suddenly imposed upon him, and as the dial indicated the hour set for the arrival of the chief men of Villingen, he could scarcely contain himself.

He bustled around the hall giving orders, only to countermand them. He decorated the paintings and steel armor of a Berlich with the colors of an Ebertus. When the pose of some enormous steel knight did not seem of sufficient dignity, he removed the lance and shield and in his excitement replaced them with a fowling-piece and a hunting-horn only to discover his error a moment afterwards.

The servants were busy with rugs, dusters, mops, and pails, and in spite of the confusion produced by the unexpected event, the hall soon looked bright and inviting. The great oak ceiling beams and panelled squares, the high wainscots

and carved friezes, unusually artistic, even in those days of handsome woodcarving, responded to the vigorous polishing bestowed upon them. The splendid old woodwork seemed to feel the high honor conferred on the owner and master of it all, and shone out with wondrous lustre after years of partial neglect.

The logs in the enormous fireplace burned and crackled a noisy accompaniment to the bustling of the servants and warmed up the damp room to a sufficient degree to thaw out the rigid and severe steel-clad knights who stood around the room on their pedestals. The glowing warmth of the burning logs caused them to perspire freely through the pores of their cuirasses, helmets, shoulder and leg pieces.

Sharp reports, like the discharges of a pistol, resounded through the room at intervals. The servants immediately ceased working and looked in wonder and superstitious awe at the grim rows of knights about them. Then hands were raised and the sign of the cross hurriedly made in acknowledgment of the "omen," for such was the depth of superstition among the lower classes at the time, that every natural manifestation, not clearly understood, was taken as a sign or omen of good or ill luck, as the mood happened to dictate.

As the warmth rolled into the higher portions of the hall, the crackling increased and the bursts of laughter and clatter stopped entirely. All talk was conducted in whispers and the old women rolled their eyes knowingly at the younger ones and whispered all sorts of prophecies in explanation of the "signs" into their eager ears.

The labor of the servants was finally finished and Kuno, with swelling pride, marched proudly around the decorated room. After a final inspection, he, too, left the room and locked it.

None too soon, however, for the blare of many trumpets was heard and the approach of horses clearly resounded through the corridors. The delegations had arrived at the square.

CHAPTER XIX.

GEROLD TAKES ACTIVE COMMAND.

FROM the principal street, which ended at the headquarters of the garrison of Villingen, a fine procession was entering the square and moving towards Ebertus's Thurm. At the extreme front, six heralds rode on white horses, each with a brightly polished trumpet, from which flowed rich silken drapery embroidered with the double eagle of Villingen.

Immediately behind these, rode two enormous troopers, mounted on gaily caparisoned black horses. One of these supported the standard of Villingen ; the other, the standard of Austria. Behind the flags rode Thanner, the commandant, resplendent in his best parade uniform, and mounted on an enormous cream-colored charger. He was fully equipped with armor, and at his side hung the great sabre which had been the pride of his ancestors. Behind him rode Carolus von Haisus and Wilhelm von Dougal, followed by Lumbas, Robertus, Rheinhold, Haller, the enormous Gurdin, Danni, Bakus, and finally the subaltern officers, followed by the burgomaster, the council, municipal officers, and clerks.

A guard of honor, consisting of one hundred men, the heavy cavalry of the city, clad in shining armor and with lances at rest, brought up the rear of the procession.

The square was packed with soldiers off duty, guildsmen, tradesmen, burghers and peasants, while women and children crowded and pushed to the best points of vantage.

Windows were filled, and everywhere the eye rested, bright and smiling faces greeted the onlooker.

The head of the procession had reached Ebertus's Thurm and after another long drawn out fanfare of trumpets, Colonel Thanner wheeled his horse and gave orders to the guard who were about entering the square.

The horsemen formed in a semi-circle around the groups of officers and civilians, facing their steeds towards the great gate of the house. A number of men-at-arms took the bridles of the horses as the riders dismounted and by twos and threes the delegations entered the building.

Thanner, with Carolus, von Dougal, Lumbas, and the burgomaster, walked into the great hall, preceded by Kuno, who seated them in their proper places. These were followed by the subalterns and civilians who occupied the rear part of the hall. When all was in readiness, the trumpeters entered the room and separating into two groups, repeated the long fanfare. A moment later, Gerold von Ebertus entered the hall and escorted by the trumpeters walked with great dignity and self-possession to the dais and mounting thereon, calmly faced the throngs, who now closed up around him.

Madame von Ebertus, Anna, and Bertha, accompanied by the wives and daughters of many of the prominent men of Villingen, occupied the left portion of the room at the side of the dais.

Colonel Thanner and Burgomaster Sohertler together walked to a position immediately in front of Gerold. The commandant briefly recited the events which led up to the conferring of the appointment and stated the deplorable fact that the original commission had been captured and was in the hands of their enemies. He finally concluded :

"And now, Sir Gerold von Ebertus, I have the great honor to confer upon you the emblem of supreme command and the governorship of this territory, embracing the city of Villingen in the vassalage of Baden, of the House of Austria and chief fortress of his Majesty King Ferdinand, with her

dependencies, Donaueschingen, Neustadt, Triberg, Hornberg, Haslach ; their villages, jurisdictions, and dependencies, and the fortress of Rothweil, with her dependencies, Oberndorf, Tuttlingen, Spaichingen, Sulz, and Freudenstadt, their villages, jurisdictions, and dependencies, in the name of his Majesty, Ferdinand, Emperor of Germany, and King of Austria, our illustrious Protector of the Faith and Catholic Monarch."

The suppressed excitement which possessed the entire gathering burst into a living flame as the burgomaster presented the keys of the city of Villingen to Gerold von Ebertus.

Carolus von Haisus could contain himself no longer. He grasped the hilt of his great sword, drawing the blade, and in a loud voice shouted :

"Long live Sir Gerold von Ebertus, Governor of Villingen."

Swords were flashed and hats waved, while a tremendous cheer reverberated through the hall. This was repeated again and again and the enthusiasm was at a high mark. The trumpets again resounded through the house, till the beams and panels shook and vibrated from the concussion of heavy sounds.

Gerold stood on the dais, calm, pale, and self-contained, oblivious of his surroundings. His eyes had a far-away look in them. His thoughts again involuntarily wandered into the past and again the mystic picture floated before his vision.

The deafening noise finally subsided and Gerold, recovering from his abstractedness, looked kindly but gravely at Colonel Thanner and the group around him. He collected his thoughts with a great effort, and holding the keys of the fortress in his hand, with a voice full of emotion, thus spoke :

"Colonel Philip Thanner, Burgomaster Sohertler, officers, magistrates, and friends :

"With a feeling of deep reverence I accept the high and

honorable appointment accorded me by his Majesty, King of Austria. Deep as my reverence is for the dignity and power which this exalted position with justice commands, yet deeper are the reverence, love, and solicitude I feel for this, the city of my forefathers and yours. Looking back into the pages of history, through the mists of eight hundred years, we can see her develop with varying fortunes until at last she rises into her proudest estate under the mighty Berthold. Far in the past, her redoubtable inhabitants held the reins of self-government and maintained their proud inheritance through the storms of invasion from east and from west. Neither pestilence, greed, nor the sharp sword of the Frank or Hun could subdue her, and she stands to-day, where she stood in the days of my forefathers in 1253, beautiful in her position, constant in her faith, and supreme in her strength.

“Nor did her voluntary adhesion to the House of Austria retard her material progress and development. Safely sheltered under the protecting wing of the empire, she herself in turn reached out and formed the chief protection of the oppressed and defenceless dependencies around her.

“There at God’s acre are the remains of the defenders of her faith, the protectors of her subjects, and the heroes of her history.

“Engraven not upon metal and stone only are the names of our valiant townsmen, but deep in our hearts do we cherish the memories of the brave and devoted men who have laid down their lives for those who called upon her in the past in their hour of peril.

“Through all the bitter wars of the past three hundred years, in which class was arrayed against class, the men of Villingen have remained firmly loyal to the Holy Catholic Church, and, steadfast in their faith, have maintained the city’s continued prosperity under the fostering care of their great spiritual protector.

“The past has been moulded by the great teachers of their

faith and is indissolubly linked with the spiritual guidance she so willingly accepted in peace and in war.

"But of what avail would be the teachings of history, if, recreantly, we now should leave the beaten path of loyalty to her faith and confidence in the teachings which have guided our forefathers?

"The first blow that caused the lamentable war of extinction which has devastated our fair land, struck in our sister city of Donauwörth in Suabia when most of us were mere children, was levelled at your faith and mine by the fanatical believers in the Reformed Faith. The House of Austria, assaulted by the Elector of Brandenburg, who rallied to his aid the countries to the west, England, Holland, and France, joined her forces with our staunch allies, Spain and Italy, for the preservation of our ancient Church. And when the flames of fanaticism crossed to Bohemia, licking in their devouring course the cities of Bavaria, Suabia, and Baden, when the arch-heretic from the north, Gustavus Adolphus, swept with terrific fierceness across the plains of Northern Germany, is it a subject for wonder that the great Tilly, the champion of the faith, retaliated with frightful severity and intensified the fearful war which is being waged about us everywhere in the name of Him crucified?

"The death of the Swedish conqueror at Lützen, scarcely a year ago, did not stay the hands of the invader. The remains of Gustavus Adolphus had hardly arrived in Sweden when the Great Council with Oxenstiern at its head, determined anew to carry on the war of destruction. This Chancellor has unremittingly addressed himself to the task of carrying out the destructive enterprises of the dead king and has fanned the flames of bitter and relentless strife into redoubled fierceness.

"Suabia, Franconia, and the Upper Rhine, following the example of Russia, Denmark, Holland, England, and France, have bowed to the decrees of the Protestant dictator, and have added to the vast armies of foreigners upon our soil.

"The great Tilly, valiant defender of the faith, loyal to his country and his king, laid down his life at Ingoldstadt, honored and lamented. The Duke of Friedland, the gallant Wallenstein, stands to-day unalterable in his great faith, and confident of success in the heroic struggle in which he is engaged. To him we look with hopeful hearts and to him we extend willing hands to aid the cause for which he is so bravely struggling.

"The flagrant violations of faith by the invader and his horde of mercenaries, the treachery of our own recalcitrant landmen, the sudden and violent descent upon Rothweil, and the surrender of our sister city by its false and craven commandant, all admonish us to do our duty and fulfil our solemn obligations to our suffering and blood-stained Fatherland.

"Each of you has a duty to perform. Do it bravely, cheerfully, and from a deep-seated conviction of justice and right. As your superior I shall exact strict obedience, instant action, and unremitting attention to the matters that pertain to the security and welfare of this territory. I shall visit the harshest punishment upon lapses of duty and shall hold all of you, civil and military officers of this city, directly responsible for the manner in which your subordinates perform their duties.

"Let us, therefore, so conduct ourselves that when our enemies swarm beneath our walls, we may in steadfast faith prove worthy of the glorious deeds of our departed heroes, and, striking for truth and the defence of our beloved city, our Fatherland, king, and religion, uphold, stainless and lofty, the priceless heritage left by our forefathers, the good name of our brave city."

As Gerold concluded, the enthusiasm was intense. His glowing résumé of the history of their loved city and the noble part it had taken in the stirring events of the centuries past, his graphic portrayal of the dangers now surrounding them and his stirring appeals to their patriotism,

aroused in all an eager desire for action and deeds. The hall echoed and re-echoed with deafening cheers as Gerold, with an exalted look, gazed upon the city's representatives, who were thrilled with the enthusiasm of his words.

For several minutes the scene continued, each lull being the signal for renewed outbursts. "On to Rothweil!" "Death to the traitors!" "Death to the heretics!" "Long live Wallenstein!" "Long live Sir Gerold!" "Death to Rau!" and dozens of other fierce exclamations rose above the din.

Gerold finally raised his hand for attention and in a quiet voice dissolved the conference. To the commandant Thanner, and the principal officers, he gave orders to meet him at the headquarters in half an hour for a council of war. He likewise gave instructions to the civil magistrates to attend him later in the day for a conference upon the conditions of the city's food supplies. He then left the dais and quickly entering a side door disappeared from the hall.

CHAPTER XX.

ACTIVE OPERATIONS.

LATE on the night following the events of the previous chapter, a body of horsemen quietly left the city under the command of Robertus. The troopers took the road toward Rothweil and trotted steadily onward. Before the gray streaks of dawn became visible on the horizon, another body, larger than the first, issued from the dark shadows of the walls and took a northerly direction. This body of picked troopers, numbering over seventy-five men, was under the direct command of Carolus von Haisus. With him were Rheinhold and Haller.

These extraordinary and hasty departures of troops from the city were partially the result of the council held in the afternoon, but the movements of the soldiers were accelerated by the tidings brought in haste by a mounted man who arrived during the day, to bring the information to the commandant, that a large body of the enemy was within striking distance of the city.

Again at ten o'clock in the morning, the loud blare of bugles denoted further active preparations for the departure of still a third body of horsemen. The St. Francis Gate was a scene of bustle and activity for almost the entire balance of the cavalry of Villingen was under orders and ready for the saddle. Within the open space inside the subordinate tower and outworks, the lighter cavalry headed by two troops of lancers, was forming into line. Nearly two hundred men

vaulted into the saddle at the command. At the head rode Philip Thanner and immediately behind him were Baldus Gurdin and Danni. The big Gurdin rode in front of his heavy cavalrymen.

Wilhelm von Dougal leaned upon the parapet above the lines of troopers and at his side was Lumbas, radiant and cheerful. Turning to Von Dougal, he said :

"Quite a difference in twenty-four hours. Yesterday the routine of garrison duty, to-day the departure for the field. It was a happy day for this city and the discipline of its soldiers when Sir Gerold was appointed governor. Activity and not indolence will now rule the hour. Unless I am much mistaken, something of more than usual importance will result from the work of these three divisions."

Von Dougal smiled, but said nothing. He watched the preparations for departure with the critical eye of a soldier. When the command for attention was given below, his fine eyes sparkled with evident pleasure as he noted the strictly military bearing of the soldiers and the fine condition of horse and man.

"A fine show, Lumbas, and a body of men of whom we can expect a great deal. The condition of the accoutrements, horses, and men is splendid, and while they may not have seen much active service in the past, it is evident that careful drilling and persistent attention has been given them inside the fortress, at any rate."

"That they have had, Herr von Dougal. Daily nothing has been spared by Carolus von Haisus to make the men fit for any duty to which they may be assigned. He is a great disciplinarian, and is constant in his attention to the proper condition of the troopers. If only the foot folk were up to the standard of Carolus's riders and my artillerymen."

"Why are they not?" asked von Dougal, in some surprise as he turned to Lumbas.

"Because there is no Carolus or Franciscus at their head," answered Lumbas, without the least compunction on the

score of self-praise. Von Dougal again smiled faintly and said :

“ Perhaps I may be of some value in organizing them, and although I belong to the cavalry myself, I have had ample experience with foot folk tactics. I prefer the cavalry, but shall cheerfully devote my best abilities to the infantry if I am assigned to that service.”

Further conversation was interrupted by the command to advance. The troops marched with precision and order, out through the gate, the outworks, and into the open country beyond the walls. At the ford and bridge of Brigach, Tanner ordered the eastern course towards Schwenningen, and his command broke into a quick trot.

In a short half hour they were lost to sight from the watch-tower and the gaze of Lumbas and von Dougal.

Robertus, who left with his little troop of a dozen well-mounted and well-armed men, pressed forward with steady swing. They halted at every hamlet and village to make inquiries, and then continued their march. Twice during the night he divided his riders and made a slight circuit to meet again a few miles ahead.

As they trotted on, and immediately after leaving a little hamlet where they made the usual inquiries, the sound of horses' hoofs broke upon their ears. Robertus instantly ordered his troopers to the sides of the road. Shortly a small body of horsemen, seven or eight in number, was discernible in the dim light of the early dawn. When they were abreast of the troopers in ambush, Robertus, with drawn sword, commanded them to halt. In the twinkling of an eye, the small body formed for attack, and each sabre was drawn for action.

“ Who commands halt ? ” asked a deep stern voice.

“ I,” said Robertus, as he ordered his men back on the road and formed them for the charge. “ In the name of his Majesty of Austria, surrender.”

"His Majesty of Austria, eh! And who may you be who takes this privilege?" asked the spokesman.

"Robertus of Villingen, Captain of the Imperialists. Submit, or you are dead men."

"I have no desire to die at the hands of my friends. To relieve you and ourselves, I will explain that I am Captain Frey, courier of his Majesty of Austria, bearer of a commission to Sir Gerold von Ebertus of Villingen, captured at Rothweil, but escaped with what remains of my escort and these two gentlemen who joined us."

Robertus could not refrain from an exclamation of surprise as Frey made his explanation. He immediately sheathed his sword and ordered his men to advance a few steps and extending his hand, grasped Frey's hand heartily.

"Escaped from Rothweil! How long ago, Captain?"

"Two days," laconically answered Frey.

"Have you seen anything of a large body of troops moving toward Villingen?" inquired Robertus.

"Yes, I saw one body moving toward Deislingen, where they evidently joined a larger body and then retraced their steps. We have been running the gauntlet for the last twenty-four hours. Three of my men and a man who accompanied us from Rothweil have been rubbed up during our skirmishes," answered Frey.

"Where is this body, and how many riders do they count?" quickly asked Robertus.

"The first body counted about one hundred and fifty. The second, I should say, was twice as large," said Frey.

"Where is this body now?"

"We saw them move in a westerly direction after we threw them off our scent by a stratagem at sundown; evidently quartered at Peterzell to-night. We thought it well to continue and try to reach Villingen at noon to-morrow, if possible," answered Frey.

"You will join my party and make a junction with the larger party at Peterzell," said Robertus, with decision.

Frey quickly acquiesced and rejoined his little party, explained the wishes of Captain Robertus, and in a few minutes the augmented party moved onward.

Robertus, disturbed by the information given him by Frey, actively resolved upon a plan to give notice to Carolus's column, which he was to meet at Peterzell, and also to Thanner's body, which was to pass eastward of him and circle around to the north and west of that fort to form a junction. As a careful scout, his plain duty was to send a courier back to Villingen and apprise the main body of the direction the enemy was evidently taking, thus heading off a long circuitous route and quickly gathering the full strength of cavalry, which was abundantly able to cope with and defeat the advanced guard. His men, nearly six hours in the saddle, were worn out by incessant work and chilled by the cold night air of the advanced season. They were in better condition to take a four hour's rest in some warm retreat, than to double upon their tracks and endeavor to intercept the main body which was to leave Villingen at ten o'clock the following morning.

Robertus hesitated between two conflicting plans. One to hasten westward to intercept and warn Carolus, who was to advance at dawn northerly, and whose orders were to halt at Peterzell ; the other to retrace his steps and join Thanner on the eastern road through Schwenningen. His own orders were to discern if possible the advance guard of the enemy, then to fall back westerly and join Carolus at Peterzell. The apparent destination of so large a body of the enemy's cavalry disconcerted him greatly and after a ride of half an hour, he resolved to take Frey into his confidence.

The captain promptly tendered his advice, and reasoned so convincingly upon Robertus's duties under the circumstances, that the route was suddenly changed and the plan as ordered by the council abandoned so far as advancing much farther than Mönchweiler.

A trooper was ordered to retrace the route, then bear

southerly to intercept the main column and apprise Thanner of the whereabouts of the enemy. With him were ordered Hugo von Westphal and Egon, whose identity was carefully concealed from Robertus by Frey. They departed and the dozen and a half riders then bore directly westward at a rapid pace to head off Carolus's party before they reached Peterzell.

Robertus and his party passed steadily through sleeping hamlets and villages, without any notice except from a vigilant and noisy watchdog here and there, and as the first cold gray bars of advancing dawn lit up the distant horizon, the party halted for needed rest and refreshment at Hornau.

The peasant villagers demurred at the impressment of food and supplies, but threats and a promise of worse things quickly brought them to their senses. After a hearty meal and a rest of an hour, the soldiers again pressed onward.

Entering a deep depression, at the bottom of which a swift-flowing rivulet rushed, they crossed the stream and ascended a slope, from the top of which was visible a long stretch of plain extending to the north and west. Hardly had they reached the edge of the rise when the glare of a distant fire to the northwest broke upon them.

Robertus exclaimed: "See! The devils are already at work! That is either Peterzell or one of the villages south of it. At any rate, they have left their night quarters, and are moving toward Mönchweiler."

"It looks like it. Take my advice, advance to the main road, just north of Mönchweiler; leave a few men there and pass southerly toward Villingen and reach the larger body," said Frey.

"Good! That agrees with my judgment. You pass on to the south of Mönchweiler with your men and half a dozen of my riders. I shall patrol the main road and fall back on the approach of the Swedes. The second body has left Villingen and is under way by this hour. Separate your

party at the forks above, so that you will not miss Carolus's party."

"Forward!" commanded Robertus, putting spurs to his horse and followed by six of his men, galloped to the main road about a mile away.

Frey, at a lively trot, rapidly advanced upon the side road which joined the main road about two miles below.

Passing through a thicket, Robertus divided his men and kept carefully away from the junction. It was a wise precaution, for three horsemen had already reached it and were being joined by others from the north. A sudden and glaring light broke anew upon the darkened northern horizon and clearly showed the advance of the invaders. Stockberg was in flames. Robertus was now between the great light of the increasing conflagration and the advance guard of the Swedes. Each movement added to his peril and it was only a question of a few moments when he would be discovered. The whole landscape was being bathed in a ruddy light before which the cold dawn lapsed into purple shades. The leafless and sombre trees reflected the glow of the increasing fires and the light intensified all moving objects.

Robertus realized his perilous position. A dark moving object further up the road decided him. It was another and larger party of the enemy. With a low command, he ordered his men back to the road and then resorted to a dangerous stratagem.

"Prime and be ready to draw instantly," he said under his breath. "Move along as you see me do. Now then by twos."

With a deliberation worthy of an old campaigner, he trotted his horse along the road where the advance party of Swedes was stationed. They were between him and the lower junction where Frey had entered the main road southward towards Villingen, and to rejoin Frey he must get by them. Two hundred paces separated the little party and the

silent guardians at the cross-road, who were plainly discernible as the rising conflagration lighted up the landscape. The increasing light was clearly reflected by their armor amidst the bare trunks of the trees.

As steadily as if on parade, Robertus and his party trotted towards the group of horsemen drawn up at the head of the road over which his little party had come and fortunately left before reaching its end.

One hundred paces, fifty paces, and then a solitary horseman left the group to inspect the new arrivals.

"Who goes there?" rang out from the rider.

"A courier from Bernhard von Gultlingen, you fool! Who do you suppose?" promptly answered Robertus, and following up his cool answer, said:

"How much of the road do you want? Get back to your party and get your orders from the officer behind there," he added, pointing to the advancing troop now clearly revealed in the lurid light and scarcely two hundred paces behind the soldier, who, half convinced that all was not right, motioned to the guard. Half a dozen men emerged from the group quickly.

"Get back, or you will be sorry for it," said Robertus, as they drew near.

"Draw! Forward!"

Digging their spurs into the horses, Robertus and his party cleared the space and passed the advance guard in safety.

The effrontery of the movement disconcerted the Swedes completely, and not until the second body of riders came upon the scene did the ruse dawn upon the outwitted horsemen. Full of rage, the augmented party of troopers dashed after the fugitives, and then commenced a race for life and death.

Elated with the success of their stratagem, Robertus and his little party flew along the main road west of Mönchweiler to rejoin Frey.

Intent upon capturing the daring soldiers who had so completely hoodwinked them, the Swedish officer and his troop of two dozen riders urged their horses to the utmost to overtake them. Slowly but surely a few of the best mounted among the pursuers separated from the main body and gained upon the fleeing fugitives.

Robertus and a huge trooper, a blacksmith, purposely fell a little behind and noted the advance of several horsemen who were a few hundred paces ahead of the main body and about the same distance from them.

With a firmer grip upon his sabre, Robertus spoke to his man, and when but a few dozen yards separated them, they suddenly wheeled about and fell upon the three leaders with fury. With a quick sharp passage, the big trooper brought down one of them, while Robertus passed his sword nearly through the body of the second one. The third rider reined up his horse as his companions fell and with a loud shout urged those nearest him to come to the relief.

Robertus, with a mocking laugh, spurred to him, and easily parrying a thrust, brought his sabre upon his helmet with a sickening thud. The soldier uttered a groan and rolled out of his saddle.

In a flash, the captain of the little party wheeled and again dashed along the road, to the balance of the fugitives, closely pursued by half a dozen frenzied Swedes.

"On for your life," he yelled at the trooper, and again they flew to join their comrades. The strain upon the horses was telling, and the snorting and heavily breathing animals, with every nerve on edge, galloped madly along the road.

Robertus noted the condition of the horses with heavy misgivings and then looked back at his pursuers with a stern, set face. Suddenly the expression of his face changed, as he saw help at hand.

"Aha!" he shouted with exultation.

"Halt! Ho, Captain! Now charge!" yelled Frey.
"Down with the yellow devils."

Frey, who had heard the clatter of horses in the distance, halted, and divining the cause, turned and galloped back on the main road. As the thunder of horses' hoofs neared him, he quietly ordered his men to the sides of the road, where they were partially concealed by the thick underbrush and boulders. As soon as he saw how matters stood, he quickly commanded his men to charge. Robertus passed the captain, and as soon as the horses could be stopped, wheeled them. A sharp struggle now ensued between Frey and his men and the Swedes, while Robertus once more entered into the fight. Curses loud and deep, the clang of steel, the pounding of horses' feet, the thud of falling men, and the cries of the wounded, rang out upon the crisp, clear morning air. The furious charge of Frey threw a couple of riders out of their saddles as they crashed together, while a third was pierced with a sabre thrust. Two Swedes burst upon Frey simultaneously, who was a little in advance of his men, and a desperate struggle ensued. Frey wheeled and dodged a tremendous blow levelled at him, as he brought his sabre down on the collar of an antagonist and felled him like an ox.

The blow aimed at him failed, but fell on the back of his horse. With a furious jump, the wounded animal rose into the air and fell over on his side, dragging Frey with him. Quick as thought, the captain jumped clear of him, and taking a stronger grip on his sword, reached down and drew his pistol from the holster.

Robertus, striking right and left, followed by his men, quickly dispersed the gathering Swedes, while one of the Austrians dismounted and passed the reins of his horse to his captain.

The huge Austrian, Ferdinand, nearly severed the neck of the horseman who struck Frey's horse to the ground.

The terrific onslaught, so entirely unexpected, created a panic among the pursuing Swedes, and after a few more disheartened attempts, the remainder suddenly wheeled and galloped precipitately back to their straggling comrades.

When Frey and Robertus looked about them, they found two of their men stretched upon the frozen ground, and turning them over, found them dead. Another was drawn up against the side of the road, still grasping his sabre with his right hand, while his left arm dangled helplessly from his side. He was quickly raised on a horse, and with a glance at the fallen bodies of the Swedes, Robertus ordered his soldiers to advance.

As rapidly as the jaded horses could move, they passed along the road and headed across the plain to Mönchweiler. In a quarter of an hour they sighted a large body of cavalry moving on to the appointed place on the Mönchweiler road, which soon proved to be the second column out of Villingen in command of Carolus von Haisus.

CHAPTER XXI.

HUGO AND EGON CAPTURED.

MADAME LUCRETIA, with depressed spirits and agonized mind, sat in a large oaken chair close to the hearth in the living-room of a peasant's cottage of the better sort. The house was on the outskirts of Peterzell, and was occupied by Bernhard von Gultlingen and Colohel Rau and their body-guard. Gloomily she reviewed recent events, and feelings of deferred hope, keen anxiety, and bitter hatred swept in rapid succession through her mind.

Torn by conflicting emotions and worn out by the exposure of the past two days, she sat, bent forward, with her elbow on her knee and her head resting on her hand. Intently staring out of the window, upon the glass of which the reflection of an incipient conflagration played with fantastic light, she heard not the hoarse cries of the soldiery which rang out upon the gloom, nor the sounds of axe and spear upon the doors and windows of the hapless villagers' houses.

The cries of the women, the shrill staccato of children's voices, and the groans of dying villagers to the discordant accompaniment of bellowing cattle, were all lost upon her, and awakened no thrill of human sympathy. Steadily she stared at the window, unconscious of the world, and oblivious of the rising fires but a few hundred yards distant in the heart of the village.

The leaping flames, having broken through the roofs of

half a dozen houses, lit up the room with an orange and crimson glow, and the conflagration rapidly grew in volume and intensity, but the woman sat unmoved and in an unaltered position for many minutes. She did not hear the door open, nor see the angular form of her Aunt Huldah move with noiseless steps across the room and take a position at a window but a few feet from the one to which her attention was riveted.

The increasing light brought the features of Lucretia into sharp relief and plainly showed the mental suffering which she had undergone during the exciting events of the past forty-eight hours. Despite the lurid light which played upon her face, it looked ghastly ; and agony, uncertainty, and sleepless vigil had left their merciless marks upon her usually pleasing features. Her eyes were sunk deep in their sockets and dark rings encircled them. The skin was drawn tightly across her mouth and the corners were drawn downward by a set expression. The distended pupils of her eyes shone with a strangely malignant light and seemed entirely unaffected by the brilliant glare of the burning village.

Huldah looked at the sickening sights with entire indifference and seemed actually to calculate the time it would take to wipe out the burning town. No shade of regret, of sympathy, or compassion passed over her face as a wretched villager, a woman, or child, was brutally murdered, almost before her eyes. Humanity and the gentler feelings of mankind had long been strangers to this outcast of Christianity.

With hard and cruel eyes, her glances rested alternately upon the burning houses and the knots of ferocious soldiers that appeared and disappeared in the alleys and houses.

A group of mounted troopers suddenly broke into view from out the darker shadows of the houses in the foreground, which had escaped the flames up to this moment. They trotted briskly along and passed into the bright light in front of the house. With a gasp and a great start, Huldah craned her neck, and her watery eyes gleamed with a tri-



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umphant light. After a steady look, she jumped with a couple of bounds into the middle of the room and shrieked :

"My God, Lucretia ! Lucretia, do you hear ? They are here ! They have them ! Lucretia, the boy, your son, is out there. Aha, the devils !"

She grasped her niece fiercely by the arm and fairly dragged her to the door. Like one without reason, Lucretia turned, and half walking, half dragged, she followed her aunt. Down the steps the virago pushed and pulled the miserable woman, and broke without ceremony into the kitchen, where Bernhard and Rau were calmly eating their breakfast.

"They are here ! They have them !" she cried.

"Who ? What ?" asked Bernhard, as he rose from his chair and turned upon the woman.

"Her son !" she said, pointing to Lucretia. "Those devils from Rothweil. They are out here. I saw them."

"Very well, we will see in a few moments. Will you join us in this princely meal ?" asked Bernhard, as he again deliberately sat down to finish his breakfast.

Rau looked at Huldah and then at Lucretia, but said nothing. A grim smile played at the corners of his mouth, as he took a half-cooked potato into his hand and broke it.

Huldah did not answer, but again took her niece by the shoulder and arm and pushed her out of the room and through the front entrance of the house. A large knot of foot-soldiers was following the troopers, and a turbulent scene was about to break out.

The officer who commanded the troop trotted briskly to intercept the foot folk, and with drawn sword commanded them to halt and go back to their work. They reluctantly turned, and as he again reached his party, he saw a woman with dishevelled hair rush with outstretched hands towards a mounted man whose arms were securely bound behind him. A shriek, which rose above the tumult of hideous sounds about them, rang out, and in a second Lucretia fell senseless

under the hoofs of the animal ridden by the captive horseman.

His horse, startled by the sudden appearance and loud cry of the woman, shied and collided heavily with the others. A sentry who was stationed at the door of the house ran quickly to the prostrate woman, dragged her away from her perilous position, and carried her into the house, assisted by Huldah.

"Dismount and bring those men in," said the officer to his men, after a few inquiries at the house.

The two men were quickly untied, lifted from their horses, and hurried into the house. One of them was instantly released, ushered into the kitchen and into the presence of Rau and Bernhard. It was Egon.

Saluting his superiors, the officer made his report. In brief, it was as follows :

After vainly searching the entire neighborhood of Deislingen for traces of the refugees, he had pushed on with his command. Finally, after the most arduous efforts, he had discovered that a small party of horsemen, presumably Frey and his fellow-fugitives, had assisted in capturing a band of robbers who had followed in the wake of Bernhard von Gultlingen and his troopers, and had burned the village and murdered and robbed the peasants, before the junction was made with Colonel Rau. He had also learned that after dealing out swift justice to the robbers, their horsemen had taken a southwesterly course, and he had immediately followed the clue, pushing on hour after hour. But short rests were taken and again the pursuit was pushed far into the night. At dawn his scouts had reported a body of riders, about a dozen in number, and, shortly after, the meeting of the refugees with this party. After a time, the two bodies had separated ; the larger group going in the direction of Mönchweiler, the smaller, consisting of three men, keeping on in the direction of Villingen. He had ordered these men to be followed and brought in dead or alive. Eight men had

been quickly despatched to intercept them and the party had been overpowered and captured after a desperate resistance. One trooper had been killed. Hugo Westphal was desperately wounded, while the young man was cut about the foot. Two of his men were killed and two wounded.

Bernhard listened to the report unmoved, and then he turned quickly upon his officer and asked :

"Where is Hugo Westphal ? "

"In the outer room, Sir," rejoined the officer.

"Good. We will take care of him in a fitting manner."

"What became of the larger party who came in this direction ? " interjected Rau.

"I saw nothing of them, although I came here as quickly as I could. They cannot be far away."

Rau now stood up and looked for a few moments at the boy, who had not uttered a word or made a sign since he was captured. In a sneering voice the Swedish colonel addressed him :

"So, my pretty youngster, you jumped from the frying-pan into the fire, eh ? Were not satisfied with a nice, warm, feather bed and the apron strings of your mamma ? Thought you would take a hand at Swede baiting, eh ? "

Rau walked up to the boy as he finished his little speech and deliberately pulled the boy's nose. Egon looked into the colonel's face without flinching while he was addressing him, but when Rau ended and laid his hands upon him, the indignity of his act roused his young blood to perfect fury.

As quick as thought he reached out, brought the full force of his arm into action, and gave the Swedish colonel a resounding slap square on his face.

The effrontery of the act so surprised Rau that he staggered back a step or two and reached for his sword. His face grew terrible as he glared at the lad.

A shout of laughter broke from Bernhard, but it only incensed the Swede all the more.

"You will find good German blood behind that boyish arm,

my dear Colonel, and you will also find that it is n't always mustachios and cavalry boots that make the man."

Bernhard laid his hand reprovingly on Rau's shoulders and soothed him with additional medicine for his wounded pride.

"You are certainly at fault, my friend. Sons of German nobles draw fine distinctions. Nose-pulling is a deadly insult, especially when the son is young and pretty. But enough of this comedy; we are here for different work. Turn this little fire-eater over to his mother and that long and bony 'court beauty,' and keep a watch over him or he will escape."

Turning to his officer, who stood beside Egon, and who could scarcely suppress his hilarity at the rebuke the Swedish colonel had suffered at the hands of this stripling at his side, Bernhard ordered him to turn his prisoner over to a trusty man to take him to his mother.

The officer returned in a few moments and asked what should be done with the other prisoner.

"How badly is he wounded?"

"Cut across the arm, stabbed in the side, and in addition, suffering from a wound received at Rothweil during the escape," promptly replied the Suabian officer.

"Have him cared for the best you can. We shall take him with us and make an example of him," said Bernhard.

"Oh, that is right. Lumber up your command with sick and wounded. It seems to me that the least you can do for this devil is to shoot him before we leave this place. A dozen or more of my men are dead, owing to this man's desperate work. I will not tolerate such leniency, Von Gultlingen. He must suffer the penalty of his deeds and of breaking his parole, whether strong or wounded," snappishly interjected Rau, whose anger had not subsided. Bernhard looked disparagingly at Rau and was undecided. After a moment's reflection, he added:

"My men captured them and they are Germans. Had they been captured by your Swedes, I would not interfere.

The man deserves death. He has violated his parole and been instrumental in killing a number of our soldiers. But he is wounded, and should be given a chance to recover. I shall, however, be guided by your wishes, Colonel."

"Then he shall die before we leave Peterzell, and before noon to-day. Guard him well and give him such care as he needs. He shall be executed by my musketeers in military form."

Bernhard simply bowed his head in assent as Rau finished. The officer saluted, and left the apartment to carry out the orders.

Shortly after, the two colonels mounted their horses and, accompanied by their body-guard, rode through the burning village, and to the advanced outposts towards Mönchweiler. A few minutes later the remnant of the advance guard who had escaped from the skirmish with Robertus and Frey arrived and reported. Rau was terribly angered at the tidings, and turning to Gultlingen said :

"So much for tarrying. The cooped-up burghers are exploiting themselves. I shall repay them in kind as soon as the train arrives. These delays are harrowing. We must send a strong party at once to explore that road."

He indicated with his hand the road over which his advance guard had precipitately fled. Fifteen minutes later, one hundred men led by Gultlingen moved rapidly towards Mönchweiler.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE WALK ON THE RAMPART.

WILHELM VON DOUGAL was busily engaged in looking over the defences of Villingen, soon after Thanner and the main body of cavalry left the city on their eastward journey. He examined into, and calculated critically, the power of resistance of which the sturdy defences of the city were capable. Much he knew of the strength of the city and her strategic position, but he had never carefully inspected the city's fortifications in the various visits which he had to paid to the city in the past.

Now that Villingen was to be his home, he looked upon that tight little burg with far different eyes, and as he passed first along the outer, and then the inner line of defences, he mentally calculated the remote chances of success which an invader would have in storming such an apparently impregnable fortress.

As he strolled abstractedly towards the St. Francis Tower, after his long walk, a party of women unexpectedly turned an angle and met him face to face. With a graceful and courtly salute he stepped aside to allow them as much room as possible.

Four women made up the party. The elder of them gave Von Dougal a pleasant but dignified bow. The younger woman at her side looked at him with a sharp, searching look, but bowed to him with a pleasant smile as she passed him.

The third one stopped and extending her hand, said to him :

"Herr von Dougal, although I have not had the pleasure of meeting you at our house, I cannot allow you to pass us in this manner. I am Bertha von Haisus, sister of Carolus."

Von Dougal was visibly embarrassed at the unaffected and sincere manner of the woman and rather bashfully took the hand that was extended to him. Before he had fairly recovered his composure, Bertha called to the others :

"Madame von Ebertus, see whom we find here." The two women had stopped as Bertha introduced herself, and now walked slowly back to them.

"This gentleman," said she, as Madame von Ebertus approached, "is Wilhelm von Dougal, Notary of Rothweil and now our townsman. Herr von Dougal, I present Madame von Ebertus, mother of our new governor, and Anna von Eck, her ward. Lastly, Maria Sohertler, daughter of our burgomaster."

Von Dougal made a profound bow as each of the ladies was presented to him. He stood hat in hand, and when the introduction was concluded, he addressed Madame von Ebertus :

"It is a great honor, Madame, I assure you, to be presented in this manner. I am practically a stranger within your gates and as nearly a mendicant as one can be. I appreciate the high compliment paid me by the sister of my noble friend."

"A mendicant ! Why, hear him talk, Madame," interjected Anna in great surprise, "as if the great service he had done us all, and particularly our family, were nothing, aside from the heroic sacrifice he made for his city. A mendicant, indeed !"

Anna repeated the last sentence with a mild show of indignation, quite at variance with her usual lively and light-hearted manner.

"My ward has spoken. She expresses not only her

sentiments, but mine and those of all of us. We owe you a debt of gratitude that cannot easily be repaid. Personally, and in behalf of my son Gerold, I cannot allow you to express yourself in such terms."

Then, changing her dignified manner, Madame von Ebertus pleasantly added :

"Now, in order that we may improve the opportunity to extend our acquaintance with one whom we all know, I insist that you accompany us for a short walk upon the wall, at least as far as the east gate, which you probably know is the St. George Gate and Tower, provided that you are not too fatigued, and provided also that our company is acceptable."

Bertha smiled sweetly at this sally, while Anna, not to be outdone, emphasized the words of Madame von Ebertus by adding—while motioning with her hand towards Bertha and Maria :

"Our company will probably fatigue our gallant Rothweil notary more than the walk, although it is scarcely two furlongs."

She cast a roguish look at Bertha and Maria as Von Dougal turned to walk with Madame von Ebertus.

Von Dougal gravely listened to the hospitable words addressed to him. His fine nature softened as the noble woman impressed him with the evident sincerity of her words. He bowed again and said :

"I am at your command, Madame. It is a great pleasure to accompany such gracious ladies."

Then smiling at Anna and the younger women, he continued :

"Have a care, young ladies, and remember that all the gallants in the world are not contained in the Villingen egg."

This sally at the nickname of their city produced a ripple of laughter in which Madame von Ebertus joined heartily.

"That is true, Herr von Dougal. Many handsome gentlemen have visited us at various times on various business, but if all accounts are true, a number of others are due to

arrive soon, who will sit on that egg to see what it will hatch," rejoined Anna.

Another burst of laughter followed this remark, and the little party walked slowly on in the keen, bracing morning air, chatting pleasantly in the most friendly manner.

The Gate and Tower of St. George had long been passed and they were nearing the St. John Tower on the southern side of the city. Anna, with a mischievous wink at her companions, who were seated on a bench close to an embrasure to rest for a few moments, said to Von Dougal :

" I presume it would be too much to ask you to climb up to the top of the tower here ? "

She pointed to the St. John Gate and pile.

" But I have really never climbed this one. They say the finest view is obtained of the city and surroundings from it."

" Not at all, I assure you. I shall be delighted to climb it with you," he answered.

" Come on, Bertha. Herr von Dougal will find that it is not so easy to get rid of us as he thought. We shall keep him busy waiting on us," gaily continued Anna.

" A pleasant duty indeed, and far more pleasant than wrangling with Swedes. You will find me a willing subject in your service. Madaine does not object ? " he continued, turning to the elderly woman, with a gallant bow.

" Not at all, Herr von Dougal ; Maria and I will rest here until you return, but caution the young ladies to be careful."

Anna walked briskly to the opening of the winding stone staircase that led to the top of the tower, followed by Bertha and Von Dougal. She turned to them as they reached the door, and said :

" You will have to assist Bertha, somewhat, Herr von Dougal, for you can see plainly that she is quite infirm and elderly."

She stepped behind them, and a lively smile wreathed her pretty features as she shot her little bolt at Bertha.

Von Dougal looked incredulously at Bertha von Haisus,

who blushed to the roots of her hair at the liberties Anna was taking with her feelings. She was compelled to defend herself, and quickly turned to Anna, at whom she raised her finger reprovingly, while she addressed Von Dougal :

"Don't mind her at all. Anna delights in teasing me, and never lets an opportunity go by without poking fun at me. I am old, but not infirm, and I am quite equal to climbing any number of towers, I assure you."

Von Dougal laughed as he noted the roguish look on Anna's face. He was delighted with the natural, hearty manner of the young woman, and was pleased with the little evidences of sincere appreciation which she had evinced during their walk. The girlish, supple figure, and the sunny, healthy nature of this girl-woman contrasted strongly with the unwholesome and artificial qualities of the women with whom he had come in contact at Werner von Klutus's residence in Rothweil, during the past few years. Von Dougal, engrossed with his heavy and responsible duties, and being, moreover, of a quiet and thoughtful disposition, had shrunk from the society of the gentler sex, and avoided, as far as possible, the social functions to which he, by reason of his important public position, was invariably invited.

His spare hours were passed in the armory, where, in manly sports and tournaments, whether of lance, sabre, or rapier, none excelled him. Thus, to his exhausting mental work, he added a perfect balance and studied the needs of physical development, not alone for necessity, but because he loved all play at arms. Hand in hand, therefore, went his mental and physical development, and, unlike most men of his time and standing in life, it was an open question as to which he excelled in.

While indeed a remarkable man in all that pertained to solid merit and acquirement, Von Dougal was not familiar with the graces of the courtier, and hence now felt somewhat ill at ease as the escort of those two lively and attractive young ladies.

However, with a grace of which he never would have believed himself the possessor, he not only made himself an agreeable companion, but succeeded in establishing himself in their favor to such a degree that each of the women in turn glanced at him in evident admiration when an opportunity offered quietly to note his personal appearance.

Anna, in spite of her buoyant spirits, felt the strange influence of his presence, and it was only with an effort that she maintained her usual hearty manner. As they ascended the great winding stone stairs, she became noticeably silent, and therefore forced Bertha to assume the task of leading the conversation.

They reached the large upper floor, upon which a number of shells and shot were piled in pyramidal regularity. A large open space in the centre of the room or vault was paved with large slabs of stone, dressed as smoothly as a ball-room floor.

"What a fine place to fence in!" said Von Dougal, as his eye rested on the order and cleanliness of the place.

"Ah, Herr von Dougal, I should like to take a few fencing lessons from you, if you have the time," said Anna, suddenly.

Bertha looked at her with some surprise, but smiled as Anna winked at her when Von Dougal's back was turned.

"Would you?" he said, turning to her. "I have all my time on my hands now. My occupation is gone, but I might as well commence to earn a living in some manner, and fencing is as pleasant an occupation as I know of. Have you ever handled a foil?"

"I should think I had. Just think of that, Bertha, as if fencing were confined to the leather- and steel-bedecked sex alone."

Anna turned to Bertha with a feigned half-injured look on her face as she concluded.

"Oh yes, Herr von Dougal," replied Bertha, "Anna is quite accomplished at arms. She has defeated more than

one stripling who has had the hardihood to face her, and I really believe she means it when she says, 'I wish I were a man!' which she does about once a day, at least."

Anna blushed to the roots of her fair hair at the unexpected sally.

Never before had she so little desired the realization of her oft-repeated wish as at the present time. During the past hour, the feelings which were inspired in her as she had watched Von Dougal at the ceremonies seemed to return with new force, and to change her ideas like magic. Yesterday's wish to be a man now gave way to the desire for more womanly repose and decorum. Bertha's remark, therefore, seemed to her to recall a recollection of a past condition of mind, and it jarred upon her greatly. She did not attempt to deny the statement, but fled rapidly up the remaining steps of the tower.

Bertha's merry laugh lent speed to her steps, while Von Dougal's deep voice rang in echoes through the vault-like room in a full accompaniment.

"This time I won. That was a hasty retreat and quite unlike her, I can assure you," Bertha said, still smiling at the home thrust she had given Anna, "but we will also go up to the top and make her confess."

They ascended, and reached the top, where Anna stood looking out upon the great sweep of landscape which spread like a panorama below them.

The sun was nearing the meridian, and under its glowing light the chill air was tempered and turned to a pleasant degree of warmth. The cultivated land stretched in squares far to the east and south, and was lost in the misty horizon, leagues away. Northward, the rising slopes led to that dark, eternal forest, where, ages ago, giants and the people of the air, fire, and water had had their domain, as related in the charming fairy stories of succeeding generations. The city spread like an oval setting below them. The many-colored tiled roofs, chimney pots, and whitewashed houses

looked trim and neat in the bright sunlight. The huge inner wall, black and powerful, surrounded the cluster of houses in solid embrace, while the outer wall, with its works, seemed to emphasize its strength.

The glittering Brigach, in its restless course, shot gleams of light against the greenish-brown fields and meadows, and the more placid outer and inner moats reflected fantastic lights on the black and moss-covered walls which sank perpendicularly into their depths.

Anna was intently viewing the fine sight, while Bertha and Von Dougal glanced to the northeast. Anna suddenly started, and walking rapidly to Von Dougal, pointed to the St. Francis Tower.

"See the signals! Something is happening! Look, there goes a courier southeast! What can it mean?"

Von Dougal turned to look at the rider below them, who was galloping rapidly in the direction taken by Thanner; then turned to Anna and said:

"What do those signals mean? Do you know?"

"They mean that an enemy is approaching. They are the same signals that were set yesterday morning when Carolus and you came in," answered Anna.

"Let us descend quickly. I must go to headquarters at once," said Von Dougal.

Quickly the two descended, and when they reached Madame von Ebertus and the burgomaster's daughter, Von Dougal excused himself and hurried to headquarters.

CHAPTER XXIII.

ANNA MEETS EGON.

AT headquarters everything was in confusion and excitement. Lumbas was keenly active, but trying by the most quiet manner to allay the fears and direct the efforts of the others.

The cause of the unusual excitement and alarm was the arrival of a courier from Carolus von Haisus with the startling intelligence that the invading Swedes and their allies were pressing forward, plundering or burning in their path everything of value. Soon after the arrival of the courier, another trooper of the same command arrived with three wounded men and brought extravagant tales of the skirmishes they had had and of the force bearing down upon Villingen.

Something akin to a panic therefore reigned among the soldiers at headquarters. With over three hundred of the flower of Villingen's cavalry out of the city and a number of her principal officers accompanying them, a certain feeling of uneasiness and alarm seized upon those who were aware of the condition of things.

Von Dougal quickly noted the effect after he had heard from Lumbas's lips the cause of the alarm. He also heard that Sir Gerold had ordered Thanner's division to return to the city immediately. This was the reason for the despatch of the courier southeastward, whose headlong ride had been noted by Von Dougal, Anna, and Bertha, from the St. John

Tower. Von Dougal was summoned, soon after the arrival of Von Haisus's courier, into the presence of Gerold von Ebertus. The result of the interview was that Von Dougal was formally tendered the command of the musketeers and pikemen and ordered on duty. Strong pickets were posted to the east, north, and northeast of the city, at the various roads that converged to the city's gates.

Mounted on one of Carolus's finest horses, Von Dougal took immediate command and adopted a system of communication between each of the posts. Strict orders were given to the mounted men who accompanied the advance guards, to fall back immediately on the picket lines on the arrival or discovery of the enemy, and to notify the detached posts of such approach of the enemy. Each party had a subaltern officer of the foot folk and also one of the mounted troops.

Von Dougal himself took the centre or most exposed and advanced position in the direction of Kappel. He was riding along at the head of about seventy-five foot folk and two dozen lancers, and his scouts were a short quarter of an hour in advance, occupying every passable road and byway to prevent a possible ambush or surprise.

Village and dorp were passed. The inhabitants of each were ordered to forward immediately to Villingen such provisions and live stock as could be spared. Von Dougal assured good returns for the same and followed up his request with the statement that the rapid advance of the Swedes made it optional with them whether they chose to comply and realize something from friends for their property, or decline and have a "red rooster" set on it by the Swedes. The result of the numerous demands was soon apparent, for, inside of four hours, dozens of heavily loaded wagons and hundreds of cattle were being driven in the direction of Villingen, along every road which the outposts had traversed.

Von Dougal finally halted at a hamlet, nearly south of Kappel, which was situated on an elevation and from which the country to the east and northeast could be plainly

scanned. The courier from Von Haisus, who had ridden into Villingen at midday, and who had accompanied Von Dougal's troop, was questioned at length by him, and he was positive that Carolus had said, that unless he were greatly overmatched by the enemy, "he would hold his position at Mönchweiler for the present." Von Dougal was at a loss to understand the entire absence of any later tidings from Carolus, and, although he occupied his position for nearly an hour, and sent out scout after scout who returned without information, he decided to remain where he was overnight.

The afternoon was drawing to a close and the sun was gradually sinking towards the horizon amid the purple haze that intensified the shadows of the hills and forest to the west. The warm effulgence gave way to chilly afternoon winds.

Von Dougal, alarmed at the utter lack of information, walked impatiently to and fro in an open space behind the house which he had made his headquarters. Every few moments he eagerly scanned the undulating country to the north and east of him, and then cast his eyes at the declining sun. The chill October wind sighed through the leafless trees and underbush, and sent the scurrying leaves flying around the fences and out-buildings.

At length his impatience overcame his recent determination and he decided to retrace his steps, after taking another and careful view in the direction from which he expected to get tidings. Leaving a dozen of the sturdiest lancers to maintain the post, he gave orders to fall in, and in a few minutes the soldiers were again under way. They travelled in a westerly direction and at dusk reached a village half-way between the lines which he had established and Villingen.

Von Dougal had posted his sentries, given orders for the night, and was about to repair to the dwelling which he had selected for his quarters when a couple of riders broke into the hamlet at a full gallop, coming from the direction by which he and his men had shortly before arrived. Von

Dougal was surprised at the unexpected arrival, and raising his voice, commanded "Halt!"

The riders heard the command and immediately checked their headlong speed. The growing darkness prevented Von Dougal from recognizing them as they flew past, but anxiety for the safety of Carolus's body of men, and a natural desire to inquire quickly, made Von Dougal hurry his horse briskly after the vanishing riders. Twenty or thirty yards farther on the riders held up their horses. Von Dougal, peering intently at them in the gathering gloom, said:

"Who are you and where are you from?" At the sound of his voice, one of the riders quickly wheeled his horse and walked it close to Von Dougal's side. The rider leaned far over his saddle and brought his face close to his.

"Do you know me, Herr von Dougal?"

"Egon! By the eternal, where do you come from? And by our holy lady, Miss Anna!"

At the sound of her name, Anna broke into a rippling laugh. It died away as Von Dougal wheeled his horse and with a curt command, said:

"Follow me."

Von Dougal led the way to his quarters, which he entered after dismounting and assisting Anna from her horse. He gave orders to a soldier to take charge of the three horses and led the way to a living-room in which an enormous fire was burning on an open hearth. After some orders to the women in the kitchen, he returned and shut the door. With great deliberation, he took off his armor, helmet, sword, and belt. He then placed his back to the fire and facing the young woman and Egon, asked:

"What tidings from Villingen have you for me?"

"Tidings from Villingen?" burst out Anna. "Why, what tidings are there except what you know yourself?"

"What brought you here at such headlong speed, if nothing of more than usual importance has happened?"

"This young man here," said Anna.

"You !" exclaimed Von Dougal, as he looked at the lad, who was seated in a chair. As he gazed more carefully at the boy, Von Dougal saw that his foot was bandaged and that it was evidently giving him much pain. "But what is the matter with your foot ?"

Egon said nothing, but continued to hold his foot in his hand.

"Herr von Dougal, it was just this way," again interjected Anna. "I had an irresistible desire to take a long horseback ride this beautiful afternoon, and I had Blitz saddled for myself. I rode out of the gate and continued in the direction of Mönchweiler, which also was the direction taken by your body of soldiers this afternoon. I rode on without thinking of the distance I had travelled, until I realized that I had done a foolish thing. I therefore retraced my path, but bent slightly towards the forest to keep away from possible dangers. I had ridden scarcely half a league when this young man suddenly bounded at me and began to ply me with questions. I asked him who he was, and where he was from, but I could get no answer out of him whatever. I was greatly surprised to see him, as he was a stranger to this locality and evidently belonged to a good family, judging by his conversation and dress. I finally told him what he wanted to know, and when your name was mentioned, he decided to find you. Not wishing to be alone so far from Villingen, I decided to join him, as I knew you could not be more than one or two leagues away. We found your men at the village where you first stopped, and then galloped off to find you in your new stopping-place. I advised Egon to return with me to Villingen, but he would not listen to it. He said he would find you if he had to do it alone. This is our story, but I am worried over the anxiety my absence will cause in Villingen. I never did such a thing before and it alarms me. What shall I do, Herr von Dougal ?"

"Nothing. Remain here to-night and return in the

morning," said Von Dougal, as he walked over to where Egon sat, still holding his foot in his hand.

"Well, my boy, you have a story to tell, I am certain, but before you make any explanation, I want you to let me look at your foot."

Von Dougal looked carefully at it, ordered hot water brought, and after unwinding the clumsy bandages, washed the slight wound clean and rebound it. The careful and experienced dressing brought almost instant relief to the boy.

Von Dougal looked at Egon tenderly and carried him to the most comfortable seat in the room. He then brought a low stool, put a feather pillow upon it, and laid his foot in the most comfortable position he could think of. Turning to Anna, after he had completed his little task, he said :

"Did you notice that his foot was wounded?"

"No, Herr von Dougal. He persisted in riding on my left all the evening. Had I known it, I would have been firmer with him and insisted on going to Villingen at all hazards."

Egon smiled faintly as Anna cast a reproachful look on him and continued :

"You are a cunning boy ! Why did you not tell me?"

The boy smiled but said nothing. Von Dougal again went into the kitchen and hurried the preparation for the evening meal. Shortly after, a large, pleasant-faced woman entered, pushed a table into the centre of the room, and proceeded to lay the cloth. As she turned to go, she suddenly started at the sight of Egon and exclaimed :

"By the saints above ! You are the lad they took through here early this morning, tied hand and foot. You are the one to whom I gave a glass of water, or am I wrong?"

She gaped with open mouth and rested her big red hands on her waist with her arms akimbo.

The boy looked at her, while an amused smile played about the corners of his mouth. He turned his gaze on Von Dougal, then on Anna, and finally answered :

"Yes, I came through here this morning at daybreak, a prisoner."

"I thought so, and I said, what a shame to bind so young a boy like that to a horse, just like a common thief! Are you a prisoner now?"

"No, not now, but I am just as hungry now as I was thirsty this morning, and if you will bring me something to eat I shall be as thankful again," answered Egon, with another amused smile at Von Dougal and Anna.

The table was soon set, and the viands, though coarse, were despatched with an appetite born of hard riding and many hours' exposure to the bracing air of the uplands.

Von Dougal was very quiet and reserved, and Anna covertly watched him as his eyes rested upon the boy's strong features.

"You seem to be hungry, Egon?"

"Yes, Herr Wilhelm, I have had nothing to eat since daybreak. I have had no appetite. I could think of nothing but—oh, Herr von Dougal, do you think they could or would do it? It is terrible! Oh, horrible to think of!"

Egon stood up quickly and shoved his chair back with great force. A fierce light came to his eyes as he clutched the table-cloth with his left hand and drew it into great folds that radiated from his clenched fingers to the two opposite corners of the table. His movement was sudden and unexpected, but his manner quickly resolved itself into soft, childish, and alarmed shyness. A great sob broke from him as he slowly opened his fingers and released the drawn cloth. His eyes closed and his head sank on his breast.

Von Dougal looked at Egon with surprise and then alarm. He raised himself in his chair, resting one hand on the edge of the table and the other on his hip, and looked intently at the curious mixture of anger and sorrow which was plainly agitating his youthful friend.

When Egon concluded, Von Dougal crossed to the other side of the table, where the boy stood nervously working his

fingers on the table-cloth. He touched him on the shoulder and then put his arm around him, saying :

"Now tell me, my boy, what is troubling you so greatly. I know you have had a hard time, without your telling me ; but, what is it that agitates you so? Tell me."

"Oh, how can I tell you ! That good and brave man may be dead even now. Oh, Herr Wilhelm !"

"Who? I insist that you tell me," said Von Dougal.

Egon raised his eyes, filled with tears, and looked appealingly at Von Dougal, whose surprise and curiosity were increasing each moment.

"Tell me, I say ! Of whom do you speak?"

The boy threw back his head and again the flash came to his eyes through the tears as he repeated Von Dougal's words :

"Who? Hugo Westphal ! He was wounded and taken prisoner with me this morning. We were taken to a town north of here and handed over to that terrible man, Colonel Rau. I was put under my mother's care, but escaped soon after, while Herr Hugo was condemned to be shot at noon to-day, like a dog, wounded as he was."

"My God ! What do you tell me?" Von Dougal was visibly overcome by the words from the lips of his young friend. He staggered back a step or two and clenched his hands in agony of mind. With a great effort he controlled himself, and in a minute or two sat down again in his chair.

The dramatic scene was not lost on Anna as she furtively glanced first at the slender form of Egon, then at the sturdy figure of Von Dougal, whose proportions seemed greater as he was silhouetted against the blazing fire on the hearth.

After a pause of a few minutes, during which time Von Dougal again seated himself, Egon spoke in a painfully strained voice and rehearsed in detail the whole story of the plan of escape from Rothweil.

Von Dougal listened with keen attention, while Anna heard the harrowing story with mingled feelings of pity, admiration, and alarm.

As Egon finished speaking he again gave way to his feelings and his tears coursed thick and fast down his soft cheeks.

Von Dougal sat as if in a dream, then started to his feet and passed quickly to the boy. He grasped him and drew him to his breast while he kissed his fair forehead and stroked his hair.

"Brave boy, you are indeed a worthy son of Gerold von Ebertus. Brave, brave boy!"

Anna rose from her chair and staggered rather than walked forward.

"What! Gerold von Ebertus's son? My cousin?"

Egon turned his face to her and gave her a searching look through his tears.

"Ah, my child! My boy! You are indeed a brave boy, Come here to me, Egon. What strange circumstance threw us together? You, my cousin? Thank God, I came here! Thank God, I wandered so far from Villingen to find a young hero!"

Anna clasped Egon to her and tenderly kissed his cheeks. She looked with soft eyes at the fair features, and her whole sympathetic nature flowed out to the childish form she pressed so closely to her. She placed her pretty cheek to his forehead as she rested his head against her breast, and was filled with a new and lasting affection for the boy.

Not a word was spoken for a long time and nothing broke the silence of the room except the crackling of the fire and Von Dougal's footsteps as he paced the room with quick and nervous strides.

The rotund peasant woman looked into the room from the slightly opened door, but quickly closed it again as she noted the scene. Von Dougal continued his walk and glanced with softened eyes at Anna, who had again seated herself before the fire, where she had drawn Egon to the footstool close to her. His head rested on her lap, as she softly stroked his hair. The danger, excitement, and fatigue

which the boy had undergone told on him and he fell asleep in Anna's arms. She watched him with fond eyes and noted the brief struggle between will and the forces of nature. His regular breathing was interrupted by nervous twitchings as he again lived through the horrible scenes which he had witnessed during the past three days, but gradually his worn-out body passed into a deep and dreamless sleep.

Von Dougal stepped into the kitchen and had beds prepared for Anna and the boy. When everything was in readiness, he took Egon in his arms and tenderly carried him to rest.

In a subdued voice he bade Anna good-night, and as he extended his hand to her, she said :

"Herr von Dougal, I am deeply grieved at your added sorrow. You have my heartfelt sympathy." She looked into his great, frank eyes, and then dropped her own in a confused manner.

He raised her hand to his lips and withdrew from the room.

He passed out into the chill, dark night and walked from sentry to sentry in an aimless, irresolute manner for several hours. Finally, tired nature asserted itself, and he, too, laid himself down before the fire and fell asleep.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE ADVANCE FORCES MEET.

CAROLUS, Robertus, and Frey had a long consultation immediately after the junction was formed at Mönchweiler. After a rest of an hour, it was decided to send the wounded men back to Villingen and also to send a courier in advance to notify the governor of the condition of affairs and the evident intention of the advancing enemy.

Robertus was again ordered, with a dozen picked riders, to retrace his steps, but to fall back upon Carolus's lines on the approach of the Swedish and Würtemberg riders. Carolus decided to remain where he was and await developments. Hour after hour passed and no tidings came of an advance. Finally, Carolus decided to bend westward with two dozen men towards the forest in the direction of the Stockwald.

After two hours of hard riding in the uplands, he reached the main road and found to his chagrin that nothing had been seen of the enemy either from the direction of St. Georgen or Kirnach. He again took a northeasterly course and reached the valley that intercepts the plateau of the Stockwald and the plain on which Peterzell rests. The smoke from the burning ruins of that lately thriving village was plainly to be seen as Carolus and his little party of horsemen approached the rise of the plateau.

The main road was passed, and still Carolus continued on his course, bending to the northeast and north of the town,

With the greatest care his command passed through depression and rise until they were nearly north of the ill-fated village. Carolus had now described more than a half-circle in his hard ride, but not a sign had been seen of the enemy.

Utterly at a loss to understand the meaning of the sudden disappearance of so large a body of troops, he decided to move boldly upon Mönchweiler. Using every precaution, he slowly advanced southward again, and learned from a couple of villagers who had shown themselves, that the entire body of Swedes and their allies under Gultlingen and Rau had departed easterly, at noon, towards Eschach.

Carolus entered the village and noted the hideous and barbaric devastation which the invaders had wrought in that peaceful village. With a heavy heart he gazed upon the dead bodies of the villagers, and upon the charred and smouldering ruins of their former habitations. Not a soul was to be seen in the entire village. Its inhabitants were either murdered or had fled on the first alarm. Carolus came upon two houses that were spared and noted that both were open. He immediately entered one of them and from a hasty investigation determined that they had been used as headquarters during the night. He passed out of the back of the larger house and nearly stumbled across the dead body of a man.

Carolus stooped, turned it over, and on examination found it riddled with bullets. His surprise was increased when he noted that the feet were securely tied and a bandage was bound around the doomed man's eyes, partially concealing his features which seemed composed and serene. A long military cloak enveloped the corpse.

Like a flash, the true meaning of the tragic scene before him entered his mind. He quickly raised himself and started back a step or two in horror.

It was the body of Hugo von Westphal. Passing around the house, Carolus gave orders to bring the remains of Frey's companion into the road. The soldiers went through

the barns and a light wagon was found, upon which fresh straw and a suitable cover were placed. An old horse was hitched to the wagon, and when all the preparations were completed, the whole cavalcade moved through the village southerly and again in the direction of Villingen.

With depressed spirits, Carolus walked his horse at the rear of the cortège as they silently passed the smouldering ruins and dead bodies of men, women, and children, ruthlessly and brutally murdered.

When nearly a mile outside the village, and at the forks of the road where Robertus had passed his enemies in the early light of the dawn, a few villagers were seen hastily retreating into the wooded land at the right. Carolus called to them, but no attention was paid to the call. A rider was ordered to bring them in. Half dead with fright it was no easy matter to assure them that no harm was intended and that information only was wanted regarding the movements of the Swedes.

It was from them that Carolus heard the tragic story of Hugo von Westphal's death and a corroboration of the skirmishes of Frey and Robertus, in the morning, with the advance guard of the enemy. A peasant stated that a courier had arrived at the headquarters of the Swedes and that the execution of the officer was hurriedly consummated by a dozen musketeers.

The entire body of cavalry had then been formed into line, the advance guard called in, and the road to Eschach taken. The entire command had moved at a rapid pace in departing, and the poor people had followed along the road to make sure of their departure and returned in a circuitous way to keep away from the northerly and easterly part of the town. Their lamentations were bitter, as with broken hearts they wended their way once more towards their ruined homes and desolate firesides.

Carolus again changed his plans, ordering two men, with the remains of Hugo, back to their first position of the



Like a flash, the true meaning of the tragic scene before him
entered his mind. (Page 201.)



morning to join Frey and Robertus. With the remainder of his party he took the road toward Kappel to find out the meaning of the sudden retreat of the enemy.

Hour after hour, Carolus and his body of soldiers moved along in the steps of the Swedes, and found that they had passed through villages and hamlets without stopping. They had committed no outrages, impressed no supplies, but passed rapidly on.

The sun declined towards the horizon and yet Carolus kept on in steady pursuit over the rough country, passing through woodland, dale, and upland, sending his men in twos and threes northerly and easterly, always inquiring from the inhabitants concerning the movements of the Swedes, and always receiving the same answer that they were moving along in an easterly direction.

Kappel was reached and Carolus decided to remain there for the night. He posted his sentries and occupied a house on the extreme east of the village, where roads converged from four directions, and over one of which the enemy must pass if a return was made.

Carolus, worn out by the incessant riding and depressed by the scenes which he had witnessed that day, finally rolled himself in his mantle and was soon fast asleep. It thus happened that Carolus and Von Dougal occupied night quarters scarcely a league from each other.

A larger body of cavalry under Thanner made the circuit and was also within a league of Von Dougal's night quarters; while a smaller body, sent out by Thanner, actually passed between the retreating Swedes and Carolus, and quartered at Winkelhof, a mile northwest of Kappel. With the earliest traces of dawn, the command under Carolus moved back on the road to Ober-Eschach, and in a short hour came upon Von Dougal and his foot folk as they were about to retrace their steps to Mönchweiler.

Shortly after, a scout returned with the news that the advance of Thanner's command had arrived at Winkelhof

and was then awaiting the main body which was to pass through Kappel.

Carolus and Von Dougal immediately sent a courier back to Kappel with despatches informing the officer of the inexplicable movements of the enemy and that they would await Thanner at Ober-Eschach. Couriers were also sent to all outposts with orders to fall back on Villingen forthwith. The commands of the two friends moved to the appointed place in an easy, deliberate manner and awaited the arrival of Thanner and his cavalry from Kappel. When the midday meal had been disposed of and the soldiery were taking needed rest, Carolus recited the events of the previous day to Von Dougal and broke the sad tidings of the death of Hugo von Westphal to his friend. The desperate escape, the flight, and tragic death of his brave friend made a profound impression on Von Dougal, and, although he was already acquainted with the salient features of the story, the sudden and violent ending of the brave man caused a severe shock to his mind.

Carolus on the other hand, heard with intense interest of the bravery and persistency displayed by Egon and warmly congratulated the boy for his deeds of valor.

Egon quietly heard the words of commendation and exhibited no pleasure in the praises bestowed upon him. The shock to his youthful mind on hearing of the death of Hugo von Westphal was pitiable. He wept and bemoaned the loss of the brave man and refused to be comforted, even by Anna, who tried her best to draw his mind from the harrowing and tragic tale.

In the midst of these scenes and when the entire command was ignorant of danger or of the approach of the enemy, a number of the outposts broke into the town and announced the unexpected appearance of a large body of Swedish horsemen. Instantly the whole camp was in confusion. Carolus and Von Dougal put their soldiers in readiness and in a brief space of time the cavalry moved towards the outskirts,

while Von Dougal and his foot folk marched rapidly southward towards Villingen, accompanied by Anna and Egon.

Carolus called in all the outposts and at the head of over one hundred men awaited developments. Far down in the depressions towards Kappel, a large body of cavalry, infantry, and, apparently, artillery, could be seen moving along. As nearly as he could judge, there were a thousand or more men. They were still a league or more distant, and as the enemy seemed to be unaware of the near presence of armed parties, Carolus watched their movements with calmness. He immediately despatched a trooper to Von Dougal to inform him of the condition of affairs, urging him to make all possible speed to Villingen.

Carolus then moved away from his position in the outskirts of the town and took to the uplands, well out of sight of the advancing army, to get a better view of the land. After a hard scramble and numerous detours, he finally reached an elevated position from which he could scan the surrounding country for several leagues. To his surprise and dismay, he noted another and larger body of troops with a complete train of wagons bending towards Ober-Eschach, apparently from the direction of the advance guard of Thanner's riders, who were quartered at Winkelhof during the night. These two divisions were evidently forming a junction at the town just evacuated by Von Dougal and Carolus.

Carolus gazed to the southeast towards the main road and discovered still another large party of cavalry wending their way to Villingen.

Upon looking at the road over which Von Dougal was retreating and which ran almost parallel with the main road, Carolus could see that the foot folk were moving along quickly and regularly.

He again glanced at the body of cavalry at his right and determined to block their progress, although they outnumbered his riders nearly two to one. If he failed to do it,

they would head off Von Dougal before he could reach the stone bridge over which he must pass before he would be out of danger.

Quickly commanding his men to fall in, he passed down the slope and moved rapidly along in the depressions between the main road and the one upon which Von Dougal was retreating. It was no easy matter to take more than one hundred riders over the undulating country, passing through thickets, over water courses, into deep depressions, and again across raised lands, and to keep out of sight of the large body of cavalry moving in the same direction.

Several times he thought himself discovered, and each time, he bore away at right angles to the general direction in which he was heading, only to resume his southerly course again.

When nearly a league had been traversed and there was no longer a chance of hiding, he boldly made a dash for the main road and reached it a few furlongs ahead of the advance guard of the approaching body of cavalry at Nordstetten.

A sharp turn of the road and a thick wood intercepted the two bodies when Carolus posted his soldiers and prepared to oppose the advance of the enemy.

At the head of the column, with a bugler at his side, he prepared to parley and gain all the time he could to enable Von Dougal to reach the bridge.

Two horsemen swung around the bend of the road, and on perceiving the column with an officer and a bugler at its head, immediately reined up their horses. One of them wheeled and galloped back, apparently to inform their officers, who were riding at the head of the main body, a couple of hundred yards behind. The remaining rider looked indifferently at Carolus and then cast his eyes at the retreating figure of his companion.

Carolus advanced, taking the bugler with him, commanding the column to remain until he gave orders. He walked

his horse boldly to the trooper and asked him to whose command he belonged.

"Bernhard von Gultlingen's," answered the man.

"Go back and tell him that I, Carolus von Haisus, wish to parley with him, and to keep his column at a respectable distance."

The trooper did not at once do as he was ordered. Instead of obeying, he straightened himself in his saddle and insolently asked :

"And who the devil may you be, to give me orders?"

Carolus, instead of answering him, ordered the signal for parley from his man and deliberately walked his horse to the side of the mounted man, who placed his hand on the hilt of his sword. With a quick movement, a lunge, and a short jerk, Carolus grasped the trooper by the collar and lifted him bodily from his horse. A sharp shake or two and the trooper was sent spinning on the road, heels over head.

"That's who I am, my hearty ; now open your head but once more or put your finger on that sword and I will pin you down for a landmark. You cattle will never learn to respect your betters. Take your horse and do as I tell you and quickly."

The Würtemberger was so astounded at the strength, dexterity, and ease with which he was knocked over, that he picked himself up from the road, grasped his sword which had fallen out of its scabbard, and sheathed it. Without uttering a word, he reached for his horse's bridle and walked a few dozen steps towards his companion, who was returning at the head of a dozen riders.

Carolus raised his hand and called with loud voice to halt. Turning to his bugler, he caused the signal for parley to be again sounded. The riders stopped, and from behind them a tall, fine-looking man, clad in heavy armor, buff clothing, and high riding boots, issued with a young subaltern officer. He saluted Carolus and smiled as he advanced to meet him, saying :

"It is a great honor to meet so valiant a friend. Of what service can I be to you, Herr Carolus von Haisus?"

"Bernhard von Gultlingen, I wish to know the meaning of this expedition and your destination. I have come boldly forward to ask it and I expect an equally candid answer."

Carolus surveyed the treacherous but imposing-looking man with scarcely concealed scorn and loathing as he asked the question.

"My dear friend, I admire your bravery and appreciate your wish to find out what brings me here. To be brief, it is to demand the body of Wilhelm von Dougal and that of Captain Frey, who violated their parole and murdered more than two dozen Swedes and Frenchmen, and incidentally to demand the surrender of that little burg above there."

Bernhard pointed in the direction of Villingen as he concluded. He smiled again as he elevated his eyebrows and awaited Carolus's answer.

"So far as Herr von Dougal is concerned, I refer you to him for reply; for Captain Frey, I cannot answer; but your incidental demand for the fortress of Villingen is to me a matter of great personal concern, and to enforce it you will have to do better than that." Carolus waved his hand in the direction of Von Gultlingen's riders. "You cannot even pass the road with that handful, and what is more," said Carolus, as he rode close to Bernhard's side, "unless you order those troopers back on the road forthwith, you and I will have to measure swords, right here."

Quick as thought, Carolus whipped out his long sword and drew his pistol, with which he covered the subaltern.

"Make but one move and your foul and treacherous heart will go to its long account. You," he said, turning to the young officer, "go back and stay with your riders, quick."

Bernhard was astonished and overwhelmed with chagrin as he saw how completely he was outwitted. Again and again he decided to risk everything and try conclusions with the daring man, but his inborn cowardice gained the upper

hand and he smiled a faint, sickly smile, as he partly turned to his subaltern and gave the necessary order to call in the riders, several dozens of whom had left the road and tried to get between Carolus and his column. As they were called back by their trumpeters, a wicked laugh rang out from the head of the column of Carolus's soldiers.

"Now, Bernhard von Gultlingen, I ask in due form that I may return to Villingen and be allowed to do so peaceably. If not, the consequences will be on your own head. Which shall it be?"

Carolus looked the Suabian squarely in the eyes as he demanded answer. Von Gultlingen looked at Carolus, then at the troopers who blocked the entire road ahead of him, then he turned his back to the daring man and said :

"I will see you again soon. The parley is over."

He made a mock bow and touched his helmet as he walked his horse towards his command. Carolus wheeled likewise, reached his column and ordered an advance. Deliberately he started his troopers on the return to Villingen, wondering whether the foot folk on the other road had reached the bridge.

Contrary to his expectation, he was apparently not followed as his troopers trotted briskly along the main road from Nordstetten towards Villingen.

Not five minutes had elapsed, however, before the tumult of battle reached his ears. Shot after shot rang out upon the stillness of the smoky autumn afternoon, and the hoarse and muffled cries of men in combat rolled over the undulating plain behind the riders.

Carolus instantly ordered a halt, and after a quick glance in the direction of the tumult, ordered his troopers back again at a gallop. The intervening space between the bend of the road and the thicket where Bernhard and Carolus had conferred but a few minutes before, was blocked with a mass of struggling and desperately fighting soldiers.

CHAPTER XXV.

CAROLUS TO THE RESCUE.

THANNER, who had reached Weilerbach on his way to Kappel, had noted the advance of the Swedes and their allies and decided to reach Villingen by the direct road. It thus happened that while Von Dougal was retreating with his foot folk on the westerly road, Von Gultlingen and his troops were moving on the main road, while Thanner with another and larger party was also moving in the same direction by another road. All four bodies of soldiers were thus paralleling each other in their march. Bernhard and Thanner were unaware of each other's proximity, and it was only a few minutes before Carolus boldly emerged on the main road that Thanner's scouts discovered Bernhard's riders.

Thanner immediately divided his troopers, placing Baldus Gurdin in command of the heavy cuirassiers, ordering him to reach the road back of Bernhard and cut off his retreat, while he, at the head of over one hundred lancers and the lighter cavalry, quickly passed up the road and galloped rapidly over the cross road that joins the main road at Nordstetten.

He reached it a few hundred paces beyond the place where Carolus's command had rested during the conference, not ten minutes before. Thanner posted his soldiers and prepared to attack as soon as the enemy should make the turn of the road. With drawn lance and sabre, the two squadrons rested, awaiting the command to charge.

Danni, at the head of his lancers, immediately followed by Eurich, Kanne, George, and Herold, were prepared to break through the enemy's front ranks. Thanner, at the head of the column and a little to the side of the road, eagerly awaited the sight of the head of the approaching column of the enemy. The steady beat of the horses' hoofs could be heard as it echoed through the wood, and the nerves of officers and men were on the keen edge of excitement.

Suddenly, sharp, quick commands rang out, bugles were sounded, and the shrill cries of charging men were heard. The familiar bugle sound of the charge floated above the confusion of noises, and Thanner and his officers knew that Gurdin had reached the rear of the enemy's column.

The impetuosity of Gurdin's attack on the rear of Von Gultlingen's soldiers carried everything before it. The heavy riders from the blacksmiths', brewers', and tanners' guilds were more than a match for the lighter cavalry who opposed them, and the heavy sabres rattled death and destruction right and left. The burly Gurdin, at the head of his soldiers, who formed a wedge immediately behind him, split open the ranks of the Württemberg riders and forced many of them into the ditches on both sides of the road.

Thanner gave quick command as the cuirassiers broke into the rear ranks, and with levelled lance and poised sabre, his hundred men thundered over the intervening space. Danni and his lancers struck what was now the rear of the column of the enemy and a horrible tumult ensued.

Gurdin was pressing from one end, and Thanner, whose advance was scarcely noticed before he struck, knocked over the riders right and left. Thus two wedges were slowly but surely splitting the enemy in twain.

Danni and Eurich were both knocked out of their saddles, but by an almost superhuman effort the former clung to his horse's bridle and saved himself. Thanner, with great bravery, forced himself into the gap and swung the ancient

sabre of his family with fearful effect. He was opposed by two young officers, who fought desperately to bring him down. One dropped off his horse struck to the death, but the other discharged his pistol almost in the face of the brave officer. A frantic grasp at the pommel of the saddle, a nerveless clutch at his head, and the former commandant of Villingen fell off his horse a corpse.

Great consternation ensued among his soldiers, but only for a second or two. Then with renewed anger and frenzied hate, they fought with fearful execution. The hoarse shouts of "God with us!" from Gurdin's riders sounded closer and closer and the two points of the wedge were coming together through the living, writhing mass of men and horses. The horrible rattle of sabres, the crash of lance, the loud explosions of pistols, and the dull thud of the mace, together with the fearful curses and cries of the fighting mass, made a frightful and deafening confusion of sounds.

Von Gultlingen, penned in by a ditch on either side of the road and jammed and pressed from both front and rear, saw the imminent danger in which he was placed. With all the energy at his command he directed his troopers. He and his officers fought bravely foot by foot, but hemmed in as he was, only a portion of his men could oppose the attack. In sheer desperation, he wheeled most of his men and fell furiously on Thanner's troopers. The bugles sounded the charge and the whole weight of his column moved now on the Villingen lancers.

Danni, who had again mounted his horse, and George, and Herold, were literally shoved aside by the headlong movement of Bernhard's Württembergers. The point of the wedge was turned after a furious and desperate effort, and Bernhard's men passed the rear of Danni's riders after a running fight with the rest of the column, who stubbornly contested the other half of the road. The two parts of Thanner's cavalrymen were thus joined, but Bernhard was now between them and Villingen.

There was no respite, however, for Bernhard quickly formed his men and with irresistible force again galloped to the attack.

His impact was fearful, but it was not so powerful as the former attack upon him, for in their mad rush they met the well-known wedge of lancers and were split in two again.

Scarcely had Bernhard von Gultlingen struck the men of Villingen again, and before the rear of his column had fairly moved to the attack, when a war-cry of terrible fierceness was heard behind them. The thunder of horses' hoofs reverberated through the wood, and the loud blasts of bugles broke upon the ears of the astounded Würtembergers.

Like a flash, Carolus, with Rheinhold and Haller, bounded into their midst and mowed them down like grain before the scythe.

"God with us, hurrah!" "Down with the traitors!" "Kill! Slay!" "Gerold for us!" "A Carolus! A Carolus!" and other fierce and loud cries rose above the din. Another shout from the other end of the road greeted them, and with renewed efforts the devoted column of Bernhard von Gultlingen was hewed, hacked, and torn by the fierce and frenzied soldiers of Villingen.

"Rothweil! Aha! Rothweil, remember Rothweil! Traitors! Dogs!"

For several minutes the unequal contest was waged; then followed a panic, and the men of Von Gultlingen dashed by twos and fours, then by half-dozens, across the ditch and fled precipitately. Von Gultlingen, in a perfect fury of despair, was directing the defence of both ends of his command; but the end was near, and with a quick order, he had the retreat blown by his trumpeters. Then he jumped his horse across the ditch and fled headlong into the wood at his left, followed by several dozen riders.

Carolus had fought his way into the thick of the fight, and was within a few yards of Gurdin, who had again forced himself through the enemy. As they were about to meet in

the centre of the enemy, several shots rang out above the deafening noise, and Danni fell out of his saddle to the ground. Haller dropped his sabre, and two men at his side fell out of their saddles. Carolus swept one of the men out of his saddle, and thrust another through the body, when his own horse was shot under him. He fell heavily to the ground and was pinned down by the horse's body. Taking his sword in his left hand, he drew his pistol from the holster. A furious lunge at him missed, and the trooper was shot through the body for his pains. Gurdin had seen Carolus fall, and with the fall the fearful and tremendous strength of the giant horseman was roused to its full extent. At the head of five or six men, he succeeded in breaking through the thin wall of fighting soldiers, and quickly stood guard over the fallen leader. The Würtemberg cavalry was now practically shoved off the road and dispersed right and left.

Gurdin ordered the fleeing enemy to be followed, and then, in the leafless and sombre thicket, and far into the fields beyond, a series of duels was fought out. Rheinhold took command of threescore or so of Thanner's and Carolus's commands, and pressed the fleeing enemy closely for a quarter of an hour, when Gurdin again called them back.

Philip Thanner's body was tenderly taken up and fastened to a horse, to be conveyed to Villingen. Carolus was released immediately after Gurdin reached him, and beyond a few bruises, was unharmed. Danni and Haller were more seriously wounded, the former by a shot in the right forearm, the latter by a ball in the shoulder. Eleven dead men in all, and twenty-three wounded, were carried by the soldiers as their march to Villingen was resumed. When the stone-bridge was finally reached, they found there Von Dougal, calm and collected. He was posted with his musketeers and pikemen at this point of vantage, and assisted in the removal of the dead and wounded to the city, a few furlongs beyond.

The death of the late commandant of the city, and the wounding of the officers and soldiers, caused a great commotion in Villingen, but the glorious victory over the treacherous and recreant Würtembergers blunted the edge of pain and sorrow which death had spread through the homes of the brave and loyal inhabitants of Villingen. Thirty-eight of Bernhard von Gultlingen's troopers were slain, and nearly seventy were wounded or taken prisoners.

The chill evening winds were blowing from the plains east of the city as the great draw bridge of the St. Francis Tower was drawn up into the solid recesses built for it, and all watches were doubled for the night. The morrow promised to bring stirring events with it, but the valiant defenders were well satisfied with the aspect of affairs. All day long until the drawbridge was hoisted, wagon-train after wagon-train had entered the city, and hundreds of cattle were stabled, in addition to the quantities which former levies had produced.

Never had Villingen been in a better position than now to face bravely her numerous enemies, and with hopeful hearts her inhabitants looked forward to the morrow.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE CROWN INN.

THE Crown Inn was situated in the southern end of the city, scarcely a hundred paces from the St. John Tower. It was much frequented by the chief officers during the long evenings of the autumn and winter, and was likewise the rendezvous where much of the business of the city was unofficially transacted. Many episodes, ludicrous and grave, which gave both direction and effect to subsequent events, occurred in the Herrenstube of this quaint and unobtrusive little tavern.

Within its four walls, many expressions of independent opinion and much of the inside history of the city unconsciously leaked out through its bibulous patrons, when either condition or purpose favored. More particularly had this been the case during the years just passed, when domestic quarrels were fomented either for personal motives or from the desire to improve the status of a particular clique or sect. Although Villingen was a strongly Catholic city, yet a considerable portion of her inhabitants, by reason of the burden imposed upon them by the exactions of ecclesiastic parties, either mildly inclined to the evangelical classes, or were secretly in league with the forces that sought to destroy forever the temporal welfare of the Church of Rome in Germany.

Not only in the ranks of the humbler classes, where the reformed religion seemed to take deeper root, but among some of the higher municipal officers, did the growing ten-

dencies manifest themselves, and while personal profit or individual gain lured many a recalcitrant into the camp of the opposition, the rapid shifting of events and the growing signs of impending danger to the city again dispelled the concord which selfish motives had engendered.

Thus it happened that when the ecclesiastics withdrew from the pact into which they had entered with the municipal officers, when the tithes were entirely withdrawn from the Church, and when both civilian and soldier appropriated everything for the commonwealth, the latent feelings of opposition again took a decided and aggressive upward tendency. The classes which naturally protested against ecclesiastical dominion thus found opportunity to advance their ideas in the general denunciation of the Churchmen.

The Crown Inn was for weeks a battle-ground for individual champions of the various cliques, and the war of words was carried on with great energy, and, at times, even with considerable heat. The sessions over the decanters were often enlivened by the presence of one or more of the higher military officers, and then the wordy strife took acute form.

On the evening of the retreat of the forces of Thanner, Carolus, Von Dougal, and Robertus, there was a larger attendance than usual in the spacious room of the tavern. Burgomaster Sohertler and his shadow, Joseph Provence, together with three or four of his clerks entered the already crowded room, while Baldus Gurdin was relating the details of the cavalry charge to an intensely interested crowd that had gathered round the table at which he sat. His huge proportions seemed to inflate into greater height and breadth as he enlarged upon and exaggerated his deeds in the struggle. He had just related how, at the head of his men, he had forced himself clear through the entire column ahead of him, and had personally killed his tenth man, when the burgomaster drew a chair to the outside of the circle which spread about the huge leader of the heavy cavalry.

"I drew back again thus," Gurdin went on, "and went

at them again until I came face to face with that yellow-livered Gultlingen. When he saw me, he ordered his men away and fled right back to the rear of his line. That's the kind of a dog the chief of the Württembergers is."

"Did any of your men fight at all, Baldus?" interjected Sohertler, when the redoubtable warrior stopped for breath.

"Who asks that?" said Baldus, raising himself and looking over the group in the direction of the thin voice which piped over the heads of the circle.

"I, Baldus. As usual, you did the whole thing and strung the poor Württembergers on your sabre like sausages on a link," answered the burgomaster.

"Pooh! You quill-drivers, what do you know of fighting? You take your life in your hands every time you sit astride of a blind horse. What right have you to question deeds of valor?"

Gurdin rolled his eyes as most becomes a warrior and swelled with importance.

"Right, Baldus! Horses are for soldiers and not for civilians; but you ought to ride an elephant and borrow his trumpet. You would then be appropriately mounted and could make more noise."

A laugh broke from some of the listeners. Baldus was visibly angered and irritated at the unprovoked sally of the burgomaster. He reached out and took a long draught from a tankard which was before him. He knew he was no match for the keen civilian and it rankled him considerably. Undaunted, however, he returned to the fray and said, as he wiped his mouth with his sleeve:

"There was a time when we listened to what you had to say, but since you see nothing good in deeds of valor or stout defence against enemies in general, your sharp tongue has been blunted and does not cut so deep."

"Your remarks are as opaque as your intellect is dull, my good Baldus," rejoined Sohertler, as the amused faces of the circle turned upon him,

"Right, my loyal Burgomaster ! But my intellect thinks as it fights and is n't afraid to do so, either. You say one thing and generally mean another—you and your little brood of black frocks over in the Rathhaus."

Sohertler was visibly hit by the shot he received from the huge chief of the blacksmiths' guild, who continued as he stood up :

"When the sledge comes down it generally hits, and it makes the sparks fly, too, Herr Burgomaster."

Franciscus Lumbas and Robertus had entered the room as Baldus was concluding his compliments. Lumbas cast a quick glance at the burgomaster as he rose from his chair and walked over to the other end of the room, followed by Provence and the clerks, who did not relish the turn events had taken. Lumbas shut the door behind him after ushering a tall, broad-shouldered man into the room.

"At it again, Gurdin ! What 's the matter now ? Has the burgomaster been stepping on your corns again ?"

"I don't know about stepping. Who looks the most stepped on, Lumbas ?"

As the newcomers took seats, the circle around Gurdin's table broke up, and dispersed about the room. Lumbas sat down and, motioning to the stranger, said :

"This is Captain Frey of the Austrian Army, who was captured at Rothweil and escaped. He brought the original appointment to Sir Gerold from Vienna, as far as Rothweil, at least.

"Captain, this is Baldus Gurdin, our heaviest trooper, head of the smiths' guild in Villingen, and"—laughing as he continued, after the men had shaken hands—"he can lift more, eat and drink more, and hit harder than any man in the city."

Frey, Robertus, and a number of others laughed heartily at this sally. Lumbas looked over at the group around the burgomaster, and said in a raised tone :

"He was also the man that routed the entire rear of Von

Gultlingen's Württembergers to-day. Do you hear that, Sohertler?"

"I heard it before you came, Lumbas, with the most elaborate details. He is a veritable Samson, only he slays the Philistines with a sabre, so he says," snapped the choleric head of the civilians, amid a loud laugh from his group.

Gurdin, who had swelled again at the praise he received from Lumbas, suddenly collapsed as the sharp retort came back from the burgomaster. He grew red in the face, and was greatly angered.

For several years Gurdin and Sohertler had been at swords' points on various questions which agitated the local forum, and the wordy battles had at all times been fast and furious. Gurdin always espoused the soldiers' cause, and was opposed to the domination of the civil classes on general principles. When the magistrates and ecclesiastics joined issues the battle grew warmer, and although the civil and military officers were again on a peaceful footing, the burly Gurdin never lost an opportunity to rub Sohertler, whose election for the last term he had almost defeated. The burgomaster heartily retaliated whenever occasion afforded, and even went so far as to institute unfair divisions among the guilds, singling out the blacksmiths' for his particular mode of reprisal on Gurdin and his followers.

Frey, Robertus, and Lumbas roared at the sharp retort, while Gurdin was more deeply incensed than ever.

"That's the thanks one gets for trying to protect the dried herrings at the Rathhaus. I wonder what that sharp-tongued stork would have done in the field to-day? Probably stuck his bill under his wing and stood on one foot to save the other."

Sohertler did not answer, but joined in the conversation at the other end of the room. Tankard after tankard was brought to the table at which Gurdin sat, and he drank heavily.

Frey, Lumbas, and Robertus, not to be outdone by the

others, followed the pace Gurdin set for them. A number of burghers kept up the unequal contest, and the room rang with song, talk, and reminiscence.

Gurdin was soon in a condition which left nothing to be desired for a renewal of the war of words which he had entered into with the burgomaster and his friends. Indeed, between libations, he cast ugly glances at the circle of black-frocked civilians who congregated at the other end of the room. Every laugh or jest passed seemed to the burly trooper as being levelled at him, and he rolled his eyes ferociously at the group. Lumbas quietly, but with great delight, fanned the flames of discord, and steadily prodded the huge blacksmith by word and look into a condition of extreme ugliness.

A laugh of more than ordinary heartiness broke from the civilian group, and a dozen heads were simultaneously turned in the direction of the cuirassier. Gurdin could no longer contain himself, and he shouted to the merry-makers :

"Can't you find anything better to do than to make fun of us over here? Just remember that we are enlisted for the war, and it makes not much difference whom we practise on."

Another and louder shout of laughter greeted Gurdin from the burgomaster's crowd. Rocher, a burly, red-faced wine-merchant, who looked as though he might be his own best customer, and who had an instinctive hatred for all soldiers, rolled his big, round head and said, as he pointed a big, swelled thumb over his shoulder, in the direction of Gurdin :

"I really think Baldus takes us for Würtembergers, and wishes to string more sausages on his redoubtable sabre."

"Yes," interjected Winter, a little disfigured clock-maker. "Like the giant of Waldshut, he craves human flesh and will spit us on his spear, the boar hunter !"

Winter, who always took refuge behind the cloak of the

burgomaster and depended upon his deformity to escape from the consequences of his sharp tongue, grinned maliciously at the big cuirassier.

Sohertler glanced approvingly at his henchmen as they sputtered and grinned at their own sallies. He said nothing, however, but looked covertly, under the brim of his enormous, black, high-crowned hat, at the group upon whom the biting remarks were being hurled.

Baldus, now thoroughly enraged, rose in his chair and took a couple of strides towards his maligners. Lumbas, however, held and tried to calm him, as he attempted to pass the officer. Not to be thwarted, however, he quickly took an earthenware tankard from the table and with a quick movement but uncertain aim, he threw it squarely at the group at the end of the room, saying at the top of his voice :

“ You craven sons of pigs, I'll teach you to pay due respect to the uniform, if you have no loyalty in your hearts, you infamous, evangelical hounds.”

He wrested himself free from Lumbas and walked quickly to where the little clock-maker sat. Scarcely with perceptible effort, he yanked him out of his chair and held him at arm's length, shaking him violently.

An idea seemed to strike the blacksmith as he dangled the little, deformed figure before him. With a few bounds, he rushed to the door, opened it, and threw him out into the street with the force of a catapult, before anyone could interfere. With a red face and blazing eyes, he then ran up to Rocher, saying :

“ You're next, you bloated soak. I'll teach you to speak more respectfully of your city's defenders hereafter. Out ! Out ! ”

Rocher grasped at Gurdin to prevent his evident purpose, but he might as well have attempted to stop a horse. With a few twists and jerks, the wine-merchant went sprawling into the dark street after the clock-maker.

“ Who's next ? ” shouted Gurdin, as he again approached

the big table. Sohertler, pale as death, stood up, and pointing his lean fingers at Gurdin, said in a quick, strained voice :

"This has gone far enough, Gurdin. You are a disgrace to the city with your violence and brutality. You shall pay for this outrage, if the law can be enforced in these days of excess and military despotism."

"Will you do it, or any one of half a dozen of your select body of traitors here?" said Gurdin as his eyes rolled over the faces of those around the table.

"Traitors, eh? We shall make you answer for that, you insolent and abusive bear."

The burgomaster was enraged beyond endurance, and without thinking of the consequences, threw a full glass of wine squarely into the face of Gurdin, who was leaning with his two hands far across the table.

Baldus could contain himself no longer, but rushed pell-mell through the group, knocking them over like tenpins. He grasped the Burgomaster by the collar, knocked off his hat, and shook him soundly. Like a vice his huge hand grasped the collar of Sohertler, while he pulled that dignitary's nose in rough fashion with his other hand. A tremendous hubbub ensued. Lumbas, Robertus, and Frey rushed over and tried to separate the burgomaster and blacksmith, while rough hands were laid on the doughty cavalryman.

"Make me pay for my remarks, will you?" he continued as he pulled the nose right and left. "Make me pay, you evangelical dog? I know you and your little band of informers. Make me pay? I may as well pay much."

After a tremendous effort, Lumbas and Frey succeeded in freeing the burgomaster from the grasp of Gurdin. With a glance of deep hatred, he looked at the giant trooper, and picking up his hat, left the Crown Inn with a ludicrous and exaggerated show of offended dignity. In the years of heated strife and controversy between the factions of the two

men, nothing like this had happened before, and while personal violence had often been threatened, the differences had resolved themselves into wordy wars only.

Danni, the proprietor of the Crown Inn, a valiant man and chief of the taverners' guild, took no active part in the bloodless battles that raged in his tavern, and, with the usual diplomacy of his class, sided with none and oppressed none. He was lying in the upper room, nursing the wound which he had received in the afternoon during the charge on Von Gultlingen. This fact, undoubtedly, had its bearing on the unusual scene which had just taken place, for in his unavoidable absence from the room, his portly and pleasant-faced wife and one or two helpers supplied the place usually occupied by the astute proprietor of the inn.

Such a scene would never have occurred had Danni been present, as he had much influence both with soldiers and with civilians. A majority of the latter left when Sohertler and his party departed to nurse their wrath and to find means of punishing the choleric blacksmith. Lumbas, Frey, Robertus, and a dozen others again went to their table, while the wife of Danni directed the restoring of the Herrenstube to its normal condition.

Gurdiu, who rejoined them, was still in an ugly mood. After a few moments of silence he blurted out :

"The miserable dogs are not satisfied to oppose secretly the wishes of their townsmen, but must insult those from whom they might learn a lesson in loyalty."

"You have spoken of traitors several times to-night, Gurdiu, and you now repeat the accusation in a sober mind. What do you mean?" asked Lumbas.

"Just what I say. They put on a face of loyalty, but behind the backs of Gerold and Carolus they are opposing them. Some of them are even capable of following the example of that hell-hound of Rothweil and would rather surrender this city than take the chances of manful resistance like true men."

"Are you serious and do you know anything that would indicate treachery on the part of anyone in this city?" again asked Lumbas in a lowered voice.

"Of course I am serious. Do you think we don't know a thing when we see it? Do you think those white-livered quill-drivers want to take the chances of destruction and all the rest, if they can buy off the Swedes and Würtembergers, out of the funds of the city? Why do you suppose they always stick together, about two or three dozen of them? Don't you suppose I know that while they are smiling at the governor and taking part in the ceremonies, they are secretly working to prevent a siege and will help to compromise the differences rather than fight? Ask my right-hand man Weller, who is playing as one of them. He will tell you what they are trying to do. He was with them at the burgomaster's house a few nights ago."

"You astonish me," said Lumbas, as he glanced knowingly at Robertus and Frey. "We must lay this matter before Carolus to-morrow and sift it to the bottom. Meanwhile it is growing late, and after the hard work of the day, I am going home."

Lumbas paid the score and together the four men left the Crown Inn.

CHAPTER XXVII.

BERTHA VON HAISUS.

THE morning following the exciting events just described, broke clear and bright. Autumn was advancing rapidly into the cold, crisp days that always precede the approach of winter in the uplands of Baden. The storks had left their nests and commenced their long emigrations to the sunlit plains, far beyond the towering Alps which scintillated and glowed in the brilliant sunlight to the south. The hoar frost glistened and sparkled in a million tiny rays as the yellow orb of day raised its face above the eastern hills.

In the sitting-room of Carolus's house, Bertha was busily engaged in superintending the preparations for breakfast. A new and important visitor was housed under the friendly roof of her brother. A bright smile suffused her face as she dwelt upon the objects of her solicitude. In Von Dougal, she recognized a man of extraordinary power and perception, and to her studious and rich mind he was a deep study, for he combined not only the best characteristics of the soldier, but was a man of deep reasoning powers and, moreover, well versed in the arts which grace life and which were only too often lacking in the education of the men of that blood-thirsty and critical period.

With graceful movements, she arranged the linen and service and carefully examined the little bunches of flowers with which each plate was adorned. The blazing logs on

the ample hearth crackled a merry accompaniment to her thoughts as she busied herself about the breakfast table. She placed a bunch of beautiful oleanders at the plate of the newly arrived guest and rested her hands lovingly on the bright flowers. Her thoughts wandered to one whom she loved without hope, and who was separated by the cruel shackles of circumstances and beyond the possibilities of requited affection. Her soft and dreamy eyes looked pensively on the sweet, fragrant flowers as she fondled them, and her curls hung in two brown lines on either side of her face and rolled gracefully down on the bosom of her white morning jacket. Thus she stood in thought for some time, the logs singing a bright and cheery song to her musings. Finally, she threw back her head, gave the curls a shake as if she had decided to rebel against the conclusions which she had formed :

"Who knows? The dark days of my life may turn to sunshine even as this beautiful morning succeeds the night. Ah, Gerold ! Star of my life and sun of my existence, you may yet be free to stretch your hands to me and make me happy. His son ! Handsome and courageous, kind-hearted, sympathetic and modest—child in years, yet exposed to the blighting influences of corruption. His son? Egon, snatched from the withering influences of unworthy surroundings, and under our roof ! Ah, I can see the influence of Von Dougal in his manner. The keen glance of the eagle, yet the soft eyes of the dove ; the fearless action of the warrior, yet the shy modesty of the artless girl. He is surely a scion of——"

A knock at the door suddenly brought her train of reflections to a standstill. Rousing herself, she started back a few steps, then in a pleasant voice said :

"Enter."

Egon crossed the threshold, greeted Bertha with a smile and extended his hand.

"Good-morning, Miss Bertha, I thought I was the only one up."

"Good-morning, my dear Egon. I am very glad to see you looking so well. You were very tired last night, after your adventures, too. How does it seem to be among friends and secure from the dangers to which you were so long exposed?"

"Ah, I did n't mind the danger or the exposure, either, for that matter. I only wanted to be among friends, so that I could feel, so that I——"

Egon walked to the window and did not finish his sentence. Bertha quickly walked to his side and placing her arm around his neck, continued his words for him:

"So that you could feel your dear heart at rest and escape the cruel scenes which your young mind cannot accept without a shudder and a pang. Yes, my boy, I understand. Here, you are as welcome as the sun. No effort shall be too great to please you and nothing shall interfere with your complete happiness. But tell me, Egon, do you not wish to see your father? Do you not wish to tell him with your own tongue the story of your escape?"

"Oh, Miss Bertha, I never saw him, I never——" Egon again became confused as the rush of events came over his mental vision. Singly and in groups the tales which had been impressed upon him passed before his mind and assumed the most fantastic forms.

Bertha watched intently the play of his features, and while she scarcely understood the true meaning of the thoughts that revolved through the boy's mind, yet with that marvellous intuition which characterizes all sympathetic and pure natures, she divined in a measure the cause of his evident embarrassment. Lovingly she looked into the depths of the boy's large, gray eyes and read the meaning.

"No, Egon, you never knew your father. You never knew him except as shamefully misrepresented and purposely reviled to suit the purposes of those who instructed you. You never knew the depths of his nature, his loyalty, his lofty ideals, and his refinement. You never knew the beauty

of his thoughts, his kindness, his charity, and, above all, his love for you, his son and heir, proud descendant of an ancient house and representative of a long line of illustrious men."

"But, Miss Bertha——" interrupted Egon.

"But you are a child yet; the scales will drop from your eyes and the truth will be revealed to you. You shall be your own judge and you shall measure your father's worth with your own gauge."

Bertha's classical features were radiant with the depth of her feeling, and the intense love and admiration for Gerold reflected so plainly in her features made a profound impression on the boy. With a still more confused effort, he stammered:

"That is what Herr von Dougal told me, Miss Bertha. He always spoke like that, but——"

"Herr von Dougal spoke like that and everyone speaks like that here. To know him is to love him, and to understand him is to respect him."

Bertha stopped short, for a deep glow suffused her cheeks and mounted her brow. She saw that she had revealed herself to Egon, who now looked at her with an inquiring gaze. An awkward situation seemed imminent, but was happily averted as Carolus entered the room with Von Dougal.

"Good-morning, my sister, and you, Egon. You are up early, my boy, after your trying experiences. How do you feel?"

"Very well, thank you, Herr Carolus," quietly answered Egon.

Von Dougal greeted Bertha, then took Egon's hands and led him to the window. He laid his hand on his head and looked into his eyes.

"I am glad to see you looking so well, my dear boy. It is a great pleasure to have you with me."

He led him back to the table, and amid speculations as

to the chances of the advance on the city of the Swedes and Würtembergers, the morning meal was despatched. The city was quiet and no enemy was seen. A sharp look-out was kept in every direction and several small parties patrolled the various roads that led to the city gates.

Carolus and Egon walked to the Franciscan Tower and passed to the outer works, where some alterations and repairs were being made.

Von Dougal remained to enter some memoranda which he faithfully made in his diary each day.

Soon after Carolus and Egon left, Anna, fresh, rosy, and radiant, entered Carolus's house and bustled at once into Bertha's room.

"Where is he, Bertha?"

"Who?" quietly asked Bertha.

"Who? Why, how ridiculous of me!—Egon, of course," explained Anna, as a deep flush mounted her temples and she busied herself with a work-bag.

"Oh!" smiled Bertha, "I thought you meant Carolus. A glance under her long lashes, however, belied her words. Anna's dimples formed, and a rippling laugh broke from her, hearty, childlike, and cheery.

"Well, suppose I did n't mean Carolus, Bertha, would you feel offended if I meant Herr von Dougal?"

"Offended! My dear girl, hardly. I do not blame you for taking a lively interest in him. He is an unusually fine man and much to be admired."

Anna again blushed at the unexpected compliment and changed the subject instantly.

"Where is Egon?"

"He walked to the outer wall with my brother, a few moments ago," answered Bertha.

"Is it decided to keep Gerold still in ignorance of his son's arrival? As if it could be kept a secret in this little city!" said Anna, as she answered her own question.

"Carolus and Von Dougal seem to think it best to let the

boy be his own judge, to let him offer to be taken to his father, instead of urging him ; but I shall insist on telling Gerold myself if this does not happen to-day," added Bertha.

"It seems all wrong, but perhaps it is better that way. I said nothing to Madame von Ebertus or to Gerold of my adventure with Egon, and you can imagine that in the excitement of my disappearance and of the battle yesterday, it was no easy matter to explain my absence. Madame Ebertus lectured me soundly on the impropriety of my actions and told me of the terrible fears they had when I failed to return. They sent out messengers in all directions, but of course they did not find me," laughed Anna.

"What did Gerold say to you ? " asked Bertha.

"Nothing. He heard my story and smiled. He made me angrier with that smile than if he had scolded me outright," pouted Anna.

"You see, that is what follows when you go unattended upon horseback rides. How easy it would have been for you to have fallen into the hands of those terrible Würtembergers, or even the Swedes ! You were very indiscreet, Anna. Your ride might have cost you your freedom, if not your life, as I told you last night."

"Well, I was in good hands and well protected ; but you should have been with us in the retreat. I tell you it was exciting, and as long as it did not come to blows, I enjoyed it immensely."

Bertha looked at her a moment and said :

"Yes, my dear, you should have been a man."

"Oh, should I ? Perhaps you are right. I do enjoy excitement and sports of all kinds, but still——"

"But still what ? "

Bertha again looked at Anna from under her lashes as she busied herself with examining some linen.

"Why, I meant to say, that perhaps my tastes will resolve themselves into more feminine pursuits when I get to be as old as you are."

She laughed a merry, bright laugh. Von Dougal entered the room and smilingly greeted Anna.

"Well, little truant, how do you feel after your adventure? A soldier's life in the field is not always agreeable, even if you see the best side, as you did."

"Anna has just told of the keen enjoyment the unexpected adventure afforded her, Herr von Dougal, and I believe really that she did enjoy it. She always wanted to be a man, you know," said Bertha as she glanced at Anna. "But excuse me for a moment, I must attend to a few little duties."

She left the room to give orders to the servants for the day. Von Dougal took the chair vacated by Bertha, and with his frank, open countenance, looked admiringly at Anna.

"You look well, Miss Anna. Would you and Bertha like to walk on the wall this morning? I must report soon at headquarters and should be charmed to escort you this bright, beautiful morning."

"I shall be delighted, I am sure, for I can't get too much air and sunshine. I always feel depressed when I am cooped up in the house," answered Anna.

"But I presume it makes a difference whether one has company or is alone. It does with me."

"Yes, it makes some difference." Anna raised her eyes slowly from her work and looked Von Dougal squarely in the face. He now in turn was visibly embarrassed at the calm, searching glance which Anna bent on him. With the adroitness of a clever woman, Anna relieved the situation in a second.

"What do you think is the best to do with Egon, Herr von Dougal?"

"Just what we decided on last night. To wait a day or so before acquainting Sir Gerold with the fact of his son's arrival. Egon is a strange boy and must be thoroughly understood. Let him revolve matters a little in his own mind and the result will come surely. I know him well,

Nothing can be accomplished by driving. The bow has been bent and the arrow is on its flight. Wait until we see how good the aim has been before we launch another shaft."

Bertha again entered the room and glanced quickly at Anna and Von Dougal.

"Herr von Dougal proposes a walk on the wall, Bertha, and I have accepted his invitation. Will you accompany us?"

"No, Anna, I must attend to some things, but I may join you later."

"Then we will go on, Herr von Dougal, if you are ready."

The notary left the room, took his hat and cane, wrapped a short military mantle about him, and in company with Anna, walked leisurely along the streets in the direction of the St. Francis Gate.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

TREACHERY.

IN an upper room of the burgomaster's house, high up, to be out of all possible chances of detection, and even of observation, Sohertler and about a dozen men were congregated the morning after the encounter at the Crown.

Sohertler, with his usual pallor, sat at one end of the table, absorbed in thought. Conversation was carried on by the various civilians in groups of three and four, and conducted in whispers. Every now and then covert glances were cast at Sohertler, who seemed oblivious of those around him. One or two others arrived in the room, and as each new arrival crossed the threshold the burgomaster raised his eyes and noted the person carefully. He was evidently awaiting the arrival of some particular person. Many minutes went by, and the inquiries began to grow louder :

"Where is Provence?" "Where is he keeping himself?" "Nothing could have leaked out?"

After another interminable delay, Rocher, the red-faced wine-merchant, approached Sohertler, and laying his great hand on the burgomaster's shoulder, said to him :

"Burgomaster, it is over an hour past the time appointed, and if any action is to be taken we should proceed, even without Provence."

"That I will not do. Provence is secretary, as well as notary, and without him I will not proceed."

Winter, the clock-maker, hobbled up as Rocher spoke to the burgomaster, and advised proceeding. He said :

"Surely the question of submitting to the Duke Julius of Würtemberg can be canvassed without the quill of Provence?"

Winter accompanied his sarcastic reference to the notary with a grin that emphasized his dwarfed and misshapen head. Encouraged by the assistance given him by Winter, the wine-merchant again pressed his demand for action :

"Has it come to this, Sohertler, that we are governed by an understrapper, and that the notary is burgomaster? We all know that we are in hourly danger of being summoned to surrender, yet this precious assistant-burgomaster takes his time and is an hour late. I am for proceeding, fellow-citizens!" said he, addressing the assembled civilians, who now turned upon the group at the head of the table.

"What say you?"

A few voices were heard in approval of the proceedings, but the majority either feared to take sides, or were unwilling to take the initiative.

While the group hesitated the door opened, and Joseph Provence entered the room. He cast a quick, suspicious look upon the faces of the assembled men, and with an apologetic air bowed to the burgomaster, who sat upright in his chair and busied himself with the preparations for the sitting.

"I was unavoidably detained, and could not get back in time. I have seen the emissary, and he assures me that no demand will be made for a day or two. The forces are at Kappel, where a junction is being made with larger bodies of Swedes and their allies, who have crossed the forest and are on their way to Würtemberg to oppose the Imperialists. What news inside the city, Herr Burgomaster?"

"None to speak of. Everything is military, and the civilian seems to have no rights that they are bound to respect. The guilds are carrying everything with a high hand, and it is time that the magistrates' party asserted itself. We will

now proceed to perfect our plans for controlling the meeting to decide upon and carry into effect the action which we have formulated."

The party of civilians then went into session, and after the usual stormy scenes it was decided that a demand for surrender should be met with a proposition to submit to a contribution as an offset, for which Duke Julius of Würtemberg, as director of the evangelical bodies, should take the city under his patronage and protection. All religious rights should be observed, and all the privileges of the city be held inviolate.

With the most sacred oaths those present bound themselves to observe the utmost secrecy, and to defend their action even at the expense of their lives. A copy of the proceedings was carefully drawn up by the notary and signed by every member of the pact. In less than an hour thereafter the instrument was on its way to Schwenningen, concealed in the waistcoat of a peasant.

Thus was the first act of treachery commenced and launched within the city's walls.

Provence kept a copy of the instrument, and locked it carefully in his desk, which was in the burgomaster's room at the Rathhaus. That afternoon the Grosser and Kleiner Rath gathered to take further necessary and important steps to insure the city against possible contingencies and formally to approve the appointment of the Imperial Governorship granted to Sir Gerold von Ebertus.

The great hall of the Rathhaus was packed to overflowing, and not a seat was vacant among the magistrates' and councillors' benches. The guilds were represented by their selectmen, and even the ecclesiastics attended the sitting.

Routine business was disposed of, and finally, Sohertler, paler than usual and visibly nervous, stated the object for which the entire Rath of the city was summoned. He began to speak in a husky, strained voice, but as he proceeded and warmed up to the subject, which lay close to his heart,

his voice rolled out in strong tones and filled every corner of the large hall. He cautiously referred to the despotism of the military, their assumption of rights which the constitution of the city specially forbade them, and gradually led to the dangers which confronted them from their threefold enemies from without. He pictured the ghastly horrors of war should negotiation fail, and cautioned the councillors and selectmen against too hasty action and vainglorious resistance to overpowering numbers. Continuing, he said :

“ Do not misunderstand me and imagine that we are to be frightened by our own fears, nor think that the civil officers of this city fail to realize their duty to their King and homes ; but if by temporizing with our enemies we can delay the final issue which is before us, or prevent disaster which may overwhelm us, the victories of right, justice, and mercy, even at the expense of considerable treasure, will more than compensate for the wholesale destruction which blind antagonism and brute force would bring down upon us. Think carefully, then, councillors and selectmen, you of the civilians and especially you of the guilds, before you launch into a sea of destruction from which rescue is impossible.”

The words of the burgomaster were listened to with only ordinary attention at first, but as the argument was brought before them in its full meaning, the more radical supporters of the military party became incensed. As Sohertler concluded his speech, the Rath became visibly agitated, and suppressed, unfriendly remarks were passed between the representatives of the guilds. Weller, the friend and confidant of Baldus Gurdin, chief of the blacksmiths' guild, rose in his seat deliberately to ask the meaning of the ambiguous remarks made by the burgomaster, and continued :

“ Did we not see our worthy head of affairs admit the force of circumstances at the ceremonies of installing Sir Gerold von Ebertus as governor of this city ? Why do we now hear of advice directly opposed to the wishes as expressed by our chief ? Has the head of our municipal affairs

changed his views, and if so, why should we not hear the reasons. I am sure the guilds will listen carefully to what he has to say."

Sohertler could not believe his ears when Weller rose to his feet and delivered himself. He was one of the men who were apparently working hand and glove with him and his precious cabal. Nothing daunted, however, he rose to his feet, and with a curious look at Weller, as if he sought to penetrate his motive at a glance, he said :

"The reasons are plain. From the east the Würtemberger is approaching with a large force, from the north the Swede and his allies, and from the west the entire Rhine division of Marshal Horn is approaching by every pass through the forest. We have a handful of men, and the winter is upon us. We can purchase immunity for a ransom, which we can in a measure regulate, and can undoubtedly insist upon religious and civil rights; we can——"

"Where do you get this information from, Herr Burgomaster?" said a deep, strong voice from behind the seats of the Rath.

Sohertler was visibly embarrassed at this question. He raised his head and sought to find the individual who disturbed his explanation, and then continued :

"We can at least delay the blow which is to be struck at us, by negotiations, and can thus ward off the horrors of destruction and death for the time being. Who can then——"

"Werner von Klutus also negotiated at Rothweil, Herr Burgomaster!" again the deep voice sounded through the hall.

Sohertler was nettled at the direct thrust, and his sense of dignity was apparently injured, for he immediately replied :

"Unless I am allowed to make such explanations as I deem proper, without being interrupted, I shall dissolve the Rath until such time as decorum can be observed."

Weller again rose to his feet, and while apologizing for the

interruption, he again forced the argument, and insisted upon a full explanation.

"Herr Burgomaster, you have given us no explanation which explains, nor have you said anything which is not perfectly understood by every inhabitant of this city. We therefore insist upon reasons for the change of heart."

Sohertler again looked at Weller, as if to read his soul, and continued :

"I was about to observe that we could await help from our most august sovereign, King Ferdinand, while we negotiated for time, or, failing this, could pretend to give tacit heed to demands and, later, rise in our wrath and annihilate our enemies when the opportunity offered and when circumstances obliged them to depart to other fields. At any rate, we could——"

"Order the soldiers outside the walls for manœuvres," again said the voice from behind the seats.

This time, however, the burly form of Baldus Gurdin came into view, and with him were Alexander Rheinhold and Franciscus Lumbas.

Gurdin strode with great steps into the aisle and walked quickly down to the open space before Sohertler.

"Only this time, Herr Burgomaster, instead of ordering the soldiers outside for manœuvres, the soldiers will order the burgomaster out for treachery to his city, before the opportunity comes. Colonel Lumbas," he said, turning to the chief of artillery, "I accuse that man of treachery to his sovereign and to his city."

Franciscus Lumbas walked forward and ascended the platform, upon which the burgomaster's table was placed. The table of the notary, Joseph Provence, was also on the platform, as was the now unoccupied table of the under-secretary, Heinrich Vogel. With a steady voice, Lumbas spoke :

"Selectmen and Councillors :

"It has come to the ears of our newly appointed governor,

Sir Gerold von Ebertus, that certain of the municipal officers and their adherents have treacherously planned to weaken the stout defence of our city by negotiations. This is entirely against the settled policy of our governor and contrary to the principles for which he stands. Your associate, Xavier Weller, a guildsman, who pretended to fall in with the idea of the men who sought to deliver the city without a stroke, has informed the governor when the time was right. True to the city and the great guild which he represents, he has obtained the necessary proofs against the ring-leaders of this precious lot and will state them here in your presence and in the presence of those with whom he seemed to conspire.

"In addition to this evidence, Heinrich Vogel, under-secretary of the city, will read to you the copy of a paper which is undoubtedly on its way to Kappel at this moment. This was discovered only a short hour ago. I take the privilege of addressing you as the representative of our governor, Sir Gerold von Ebertus and I have also taken possession of the Rathhaus and all persons therein, until the arrival of our governor in person."

The announcement created great consternation and indignation among the Rath. Scarcely had Lumbas concluded, when a babel of inquiries, denunciations, and threats rolled out from the benches. The confusion of sounds was growing greater each moment and angry gesticulations and excited outcries rose above the din.

Sohertler, at the appearance of Lumbas, cowered down in his chair and cast a despairing glance at Provence, who sat pale and nerveless in his chair. A faint, sickly smile played on his face as he looked at the burgomaster. Denunciations of the military party finally rose above the confusion, and Provence clutched at the ray of hope, as the drowning man the straw.

He crossed to Sohertler and implored him to make a stand against the unwarranted infraction and unheard-of insult to the Rath by the military authorities. Sohertler heard, in a

sort of stupor, but was mentally and physically unable to act on the suggestion.

"Rise, in God's name, Sohertler, and face the dogs. Appeal for our rights and privileges and put on a good face, instead of sitting there like a graven image. Act or we are lost."

"Rights!" "Privileges!" rang out above the confusion as members recovered from their surprise and realized that they had rights which the military authorities were bound to respect.

"The Rathhaus is surrounded," cried a selectman, who had gone to the window and noted the soldiers below.

"Are we to be treated as traitors and criminals without further explanation than the hasty word of an officer?" cried another.

"Out with the military! Throw them down-stairs."

"What rights have they here?" cried the alarmed supporters and confederates of Sohertler and his party.

Lumbas smiled as he leaned upon his sword, not in the least alarmed at the angry howls about him. Gurdin stood by his side, and Rheinhold walked deliberately through the excited crowd of representatives, who had left their seats and were blocking the aisle which led to the door. He walked slowly and was not interrupted. As he reached the door he ordered it thrown open. The ante-chamber revealed two dozen pikemen in full uniform. This seemed to incense the members still more, particularly those who were connected with Sohertler.

With raised hands they pointed to the soldiers, and with excited, angry faces they turned to the irresolute burgomaster, who looked helplessly at Provence and then glowered at Gurdin and Lumbas. Finally, with a great effort, he rose to his feet and raised his hands for silence.

"Out with the military first!"

"Throw them out and shut the door!"

Again Sohertler raised his hands for silence, while the ex-

cited civilians repeated their demands, which no one seemed inclined to obey or dared to carry out.

"Councillors, attend!" he cried to them.

"Out with them first!"

"Out!"

And with these repeated cries, a number of them rushed to the door and tried to shut it. Rheinhold quietly drew his sabre and ordered a few pikemen to stand by, while he smiled serenely at their helplessness. This movement, which was seen by the entire assemblage, filled the cup of their wrath. A dozen or two rushed towards Gurdin and Lumbas, while others cried to those at the door to prevent their entrance. The real issue at stake, the grave accusation against Sohertler and his party, was lost sight of in the scramble and confusion. An inkwell was hurled through the room at Gurdin and Lumbas, and small articles of furniture were seen in the hands of several others, who seemed ready to use any weapon which might be at hand.

At this critical moment, a trumpet blast was heard below, and was immediately answered in the ante-chamber. Again the blast resounded through the halls and corridors of the Rathhaus, and in a few seconds Gerold von Ebertus entered the room with Carolus. Gerold looked neither to the right nor to the left, but preceded by two trumpeters walked quickly to the platform.

The representatives gave way and left an open space, and, gradually, the clamor of the excited councillors was subdued. Gerold stood for a moment or two facing the disorderly mob and then spoke:

"I am prepared to hear the proofs of the witnesses against the accused officers and selectmen of this Rath. Xavier Weller and Heinrich Vogel, stand forth and be prepared to deliver your proofs. Captain Rheinhold, withdraw your men."

"What right have you to assume control of this Rath?" cried Rocher, the wine-merchant, from among the men who were now scrambling again into their seats.

Gerold glanced at Rocher and a slight, disdainful smile played about his mouth as he answered :

"The right of might ! And I demand order forthwith."

A hard look now passed across his face, and his teeth were firmly set. He looked sternly at the sullen, angry faces before him and waved his hand as partial order again prevailed in the hall.

Sohertler and Provence still occupied the platform and sat at their tables in suspense and alarm. Gerold folded his arms and turning to Weller said :

"Proceed, Xavier Weller."

The locksmith stood at one side of the open space and related minutely the proceedings at the burgomaster's house. He told of the negotiations and letters which had passed during the week, between Sohertler, Provence, and Von Gultlingen, and finally ended with the statement that the burgomaster and his party of conspirators intended to assist in placing the city under the patronage and protection of Duke Julius, director of the Evangelical bodies of Würtemberg, not to prevent a siege, but to surrender its rights and to separate it from the Austrian throne and the Roman Catholic Church.

The councillors, especially those of the guilds, who were entirely ignorant of the treachery planned under their very noses, now looked with amazement at one another, each wondering whether his neighbor were implicated in the plot.

"Heinrich Vogel, stand forth and produce your proofs," again commanded Gerold.

The under-secretary cast a hurried glance at the burgomaster and walked to the place vacated by Weller.

"I have heard of the plans and negotiations of the accused men, but knew nothing definite until I found this paper, a copy of one sent out of the city to-day, apparently."

Vogel read the paper deliberately and when he had finished it, said :

"It is in the handwriting of Joseph Provence, Notary of

Villingen, and is addressed to Bernhard von Gultlingen at Kappel."

Heinrich Vogel stepped aside, and after handing the paper to Gerold, retired to the back of the hall.

"Stand forth again, Xavier Weller, and name the men who were connected with this infamous plot."

An uneasy shifting took place among the benches as this order was given. Deathlike stillness prevailed throughout the hall as Weller again came forward. He took a piece of paper from his belt and read the names of nearly two dozen men, among whom were Sohertler, Provence, Rocher, and Winter.

Gerold, pointing his finger at the assemblage, said impressively :

"In the name of his Royal Highness, Ferdinand of Austria, I command each and every one of you, councillors and selectmen, and all others here, to vacate this hall forthwith, except those whose names have been read by the witness. Captain Rheinhold, allow the Rath to leave the hall, one at a time, except those accused of high treason."

Dumfounded, alarmed, and angry with themselves for having allowed their passions to seem to draw them into support of the conspirators, the assemblage slowly dispersed amid suppressed excitement. When all but the accused men had departed, Carolus walked to the door and ordered Rheinhold and his pikemen into the hall. He then returned to Gerold and awaited his orders. Gerold turned to him and said as he gave him the list of the accused men :

"Place each of these men under arrest and take them to the Tower. They are accused of high treason against his Majesty of Austria."

The councillors were led forth between two files of pikemen to the military prison, amid the jeers, threats, and curses of the excited populace, who thronged around the Rathhaus in a dense crowd.

Gerold and Carolus left the building by a side door and walked slowly and silently to Ebertus's Thurm.



"The right of might! And I demand order forthwith!"
(*Page 243.*)

THE
END

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE DEATH OF LUCRETIA.

IN a darkened room at the prefecture of Rothweil, a woman lay in a comatose state. With muffled steps an attendant moved about the room and every few minutes walked softly to the bedside of the afflicted one, looking vainly for signs of returning health.

For several days she had lain in a stupor, and then ensued a period in which she was in the throes of convulsions and cried aloud in her ravings for revenge and mercy. Entreaty, hate, and supplication burst from her parched lips. Appeal, demand for action, and deep resentment shone from her eyes in the dim light of the darkened chamber, and then again the reaction set in which had left her as dead during the past day.

The Swedish leech, Holm, a skilled physician, the same one who had ministered to Konrad von Horgen and to D'Arville, unceasingly attended the afflicted woman, whose malady seemed to baffle his skill and whose symptoms were those of mental unbalance rather than of bodily ailment. For several days he gave his best thought to the peculiar condition of his patient, and, when he was unable to determine the nature of the malady, he took into his confidence a local leech whose reputation for skill was general throughout the city and the neighboring country.

Daniel Kahlmus was called in consultation, and after a critical examination, decided that the trouble was a shatter-

ing of the nervous system, the result of tremendous strain and exposure. He also ventured the opinion that the patient would not outlive the day.

Holm, while agreeing with the German physician in the main, did not believe that the case was of such seriousness. However, the ravings gradually gave way and finally ceased. In a semi-conscious condition, making no sign and evincing no life, the sick one lay. It was plain that unless a great change for the better occurred during the next few hours, the woman would die. Noiselessly the attendant administered her careful attentions, but hour after hour passed, until the dark-red sun dropped below the horizon and the purple shades of night bathed the landscape in obscurity. Again Holm came and critically examined the silent form. He shook his head and with troubled step departed to the western wing of the prefecture.

Slowly the time dragged on until the clocks of the Minster recorded the midnight hour. In the sharp and crisp night air the bells tolled the end of the day, and the clear metallic sounds reverberated from house to house, from alley to street, and out beyond the walls of the city.

A change was now noticeable in the condition of the patient, and without waiting, the nurse hastened to the west wing to arouse Holm, who remained at the prefecture during the night. With hurried steps, the attendant returned to the chamber, and after a quick glance at the suffering woman, looked again through the corridor for the physician. In a few moments he arrived, examined the woman, and summoned Werner von Klutus and his family to the room.

The beginning of the end had come. Lucretia lay on her death-bed. Werner von Klutus, followed by Martha his wife, Amalia, and finally, Huldah and Minerva, all reached the room in a short time. Lucretia moved uneasily on her bed and turned her wan and pinched face to those assembled, scarcely recognizing them. The change in her was almost beyond belief. Her eyes were sunk in their sockets, her

cheek-bones were high, and the flesh seemed to have entirely disappeared from her face. The lips were drawn and thin, and her hands were as transparent as alabaster. Nothing remained of her once striking beauty except the wealth of golden hair which clustered around her head in great profusion. She partially opened her eyes and seemed to smile faintly on those gathered about her. She seemed conscious of her condition once or twice, but in a few moments the spark of life left its earthly tenement forever.

Thus died Lucretia von Ebertus, wife of Gerold, mother of Egon, and niece of Werner von Klutus. Her life had been stormy and full of trouble, but her death was calm and peaceful. Werner von Klutus looked, without sorrow or regret, apparently, upon his dead niece, while Martha and Amalia knelt upon the floor at her bedside absorbed in grief, and offered prayers for their departed relative. Separated from her in life by the profligate actions of Lucretia and her adherents, these two women, mother and daughter, now sincerely and devoutly offered their heartfelt prayers for the redemption of her soul.

Minerva, incapable of emotion except where it was a special object for notice, passed indifferently from room to room, noting the varying emotions of those gathered about the dead woman. Mentally she calculated the probable gain to herself by the death of her sister and the flight of her son. She made a note of the personal effects belonging to Lucretia, which, from the nature of things, had to be left in their proper places. All easily secreted articles had been appropriated by her in advance of her sister's demise. She returned to the room and in apparent sorrow actually forced a few tears from her bulging and watery eyes.

Huldah had silently and coldly watched the group from a corner of the room, and when the Angel of Death closed the eyes of Lucretia, she contemptuously shrugged her shoulders and walked to the farther end of the room with a sneer at the subdued prayers of Martha and Amalia. No

attention was paid to her, however, and, finally, Werner von Klutus and his wife left the room. Amalia, still absorbed in prayers, remained upon her knees, while Holm and the nurse remained respectfully at one side.

Huldah moved impatiently once or twice across the room, and as she saw the bowed figure still at the bedside, she walked to Holm and said :

"Is it not time that this snivelling and lamenting should cease? Too bad that this saintly creature could not have expended a little of her sympathy on my niece during life."

"Respect thou, Madame, the outpourings of sincere grief and prayer, for if thou hast not grace within thy heart or sympathy for the dead, cover it up with pretence at least, and let us believe that there is decency in you."

Holm turned upon the woman with great dignity. The scathing words of the Swedish physician struck and wounded her warped sensibilities deeply.

"There is no occasion for prayer or regret; she would have been the last to accept it in life. Allow her, therefore, the same privilege in death."

"I shall not waste words with you, Madame. The teachings of Christianity are certainly lost on you. Every feeling of shame and decency must bound from your heart as the arrow from the bow. Do us the honor to leave the room and do not pollute the death-bed or this pure, innocent child with your presence."

The scene was not lost upon Minerva, and while she had not Huldah's courage of her convictions and the effrontery to declare herself, the low, sordid instincts which always came to the front in such times were carefully concealed behind the screen of her hypocrisy. Of no better moral character than her aunt, Minerva assumed that false appearance of virtue and religion which dispelled comparisons between her and Lucretia and gave her a certain respectability in the eyes of the less discerning townspeople. Comparisons were even made, holding up the virtues of Minerva

as against the vices of Huldah. Liberal donations to the Church, obtained by means not countenanced by the Church, increased her reputation for goodness, while visits to the sick and needy, with dainties and substantial things abstracted from Von Klutus's lockers and kitchen, endeared her to many—but she cared not one particle for the good she dispensed or felt for an instant the warm heart-beat of true charity or commiseration for the poor.

Minerva was a religious cheat, a dissembler of great and varied success, and she always knew the particular rôle to play at a critical time. When Holm had concluded his scathing rebuke, Minerva rolled her protruding eyes and clasped her hands in humility before the stern physician. She bowed her head, repeatedly crossed herself, and silently left the room.

Holm walked to the door and opened it, pointing to the corridor as he stood on the threshold. There was such commanding dignity and sternness in his demeanor that Huldah, who raged within, submitted quietly to the command and left the room. Amalia remained in the attitude of prayer long after Huldah departed, while Holm, in deep respect for the sincere expression of sorrow, remained with folded arms and bowed head in the shadows of the room.

A deep believer in the Reformed religion, he let no opportunity escape to impress those with whom he came in contact of the righteousness of their cause; but noble of heart as he was skilled in mind, he recognized sincerity above all forms of religion and respected it whenever and wherever he found it. Of such men were the ranks of the Evangelical sects and the movement of reform largely made up. The sincerity of their belief was never questioned, nor were the acts of outrage and brutality which characterized the application of the new belief ever laid at their doors.

The last sad rites of the physician and nurse were finished and a watcher was placed in charge of the earthly remains of Lucretia.

Full of wrath and wounded pride at the sharp rebuff she had received from the Swedish physician, Huldah determined to revenge herself upon the innocent cause of the humiliation. Early on the following morning she presented herself before Werner von Klutus and angrily demanded that he take steps to punish the physician and give Madame Klutus and Amalia orders to closet themselves thereafter and keep away from the east wing of the prefecture.

Klutus looked at Huldah and noted the vengeful, cruel creature who stood before him. Many times since the surrender of Rothweil had he reflected upon the part the woman had played, and often had he dwelt upon the unsatisfactory results of his dastardly crime.

Like all low and debased natures, he sought a reasonable pretext for shifting the responsibility from his own shoulders and fastening them upon some one else. Like the coward he was at heart, he felt that relief to himself would result from such a move. Arnoud Heilprin was dead and had paid the penalty of his treachery with his life. D'Arville was slowly recovering from the wound which he had received during the *mêlée* at the south gate. Rau was out of the city; and now Lucretia, who had been stricken by sorrow, regret, and bitter disappointment, lay cold in her shroud. The valiant *ex-prefect* seized the opportunity which presented itself and quickly laid out his plan of action.

His cold, steely eyes glittered menacingly at Huldah as she ceased speaking. Slowly and deliberately he raised himself from his armchair and pointing his finger at her to emphasize his words, said:

"So you wish me to punish Holm for telling you the truth, do you?"

"How dare you, Werner! How dare you talk that way to me!"

"I will talk to you and tell you not only the truth with regard to your present actions, but tell you also of the crimes of which I am held guilty and which are directly attributable to you. You are the one above all others who has destroyed my peace of mind and brought all this wretchedness about."

"Oh, indeed! Sir Werner, since when have you lost your self-possession and your courage? I thought the Klutus family had courage under all circumstances, especially when things went wrong. You are apparently a fair-weather plotter. If successful, you take the credit; if defeated, you shift the responsibility, eh?"

A sneer accompanied the interjection, and a malicious smile played about her ugly mouth.

"You are nevertheless the evil genius who has brought sorrow and disaster into this house, and if you were not entirely devoid of conscience, you would long ago have hidden your head in shame."

"I never hide my head, Werner, and I would be more of a man, were I in your place, than to hide mine in a woman's petticoats and abuse those whom you gladly took into your foul plots, when your personal gain was to be the only reward of their services."

"Stop, Huldah! You cannot shift your responsibility with your vile tongue. You are to blame for all that has happened, and you know it."

"Oh! I suppose I ordered the soldiers out, and gave Rau the information about Von Dougal's riders and Von Horgen's pikemen."

"Principles, not details, are what I refer to. You brought D'Arville and Rau into the city and led me to communicate with Horn and his crew of foreigners. You are the one that is directly responsible for Lucretia's death and Egon's flight, yet you brazenly stand there and seek absolution for your wickedness on the plea of your sex. You are a sweet example of a woman. A Borgia is a saint compared to you."

"Coward! Craven! Hide your face and be ashamed."

Huldah took a couple of steps towards her brother, pointing her long misshapen and bony fingers at him. She snarled the words at him, and a wolf-like grin spread over her features.

"Your lovely niece was a piece of the same cloth with the rest of us, and that brat will undoubtedly inherit the characteristics of the family, you poor scared wolf in sheep's clothing. Did I get any rewards or even promises out of the plot? Did you even say 'Thank you' to my suggestions, and did you not say 'It's a good thing that the budding youth, Egon, is out of my sight,' the day after his escape? You can't be a hypocrite with me, Werner, neither do you fool me. You are a miserable and cowardly representative of a family who, whatever may have been their history or however questionable their actions, have nevertheless always been able to show a bold front and to defy their accusers."

A look half of disgust and half of pity passed over her distorted and ugly features as she launched her shafts at her brother.

"One representative like you, my dear sister, is enough not only for a family, but for a whole state. Your vindictiveness and cruelty are not often equalled. You were bad enough as a young woman, but your age has budded a blossom for devils to exult over," retorted Klutus, in great anger.

"You are a saint, Werner, and that equalizes things. Keep your prayers for those who may give heed to you. I did think of resenting your compliments, but I see that resentment is wasted on such a craven."

Klutus took a few steps forward and rudely clutched the arm of the woman. A look of deadly hate shone from his eyes. The miserable woman recoiled from the glare and tried to wrench herself free from his strong grip. He held her fast and reached for her throat with his other hand, bending his distorted face and gleaming eyes close to her.

"Devil incarnate and beast among women, I ought to tear the foul heart out of your body."

He tightened his hold upon the throat of the now terribly frightened woman. She shrieked at the top of her voice, as his fingers closed upon her.

"Shriek for mercy, not for help, you demon," hissed Klutus, as he thrust her backward off her balance and threw her heavily upon the floor at his feet, while he stood with folded arms above her.

The door opened quickly and Madame Klutus stood on the threshold, looking with dilated eyes upon the brother and sister. Her face was ghastly white. She quickly realized the meaning of the scene and instantly came to the assistance of the prostrate woman, whom she helped to her feet and quietly supported.

"Have you forgotten yourself, Werner? What does this mean?"

Klutus looked at her a moment, then again at Huldah, and left the room without answering his wife's questions.

As the door closed upon him, Huldah turned to Madame Klutus, gave herself a few vigorous shakes, and rudely turned her back on her sister-in-law. With her usual sneer, she asked :

"Why are you always at hand at the wrong time? Would it be too much trouble for you to attend to your prayers and your snivelling and let me attend to my own affairs?"

Martha answered her with a mild, apologetic voice :

"I came here to inform my husband that Colonel Rau is below with Colonel D'Arville, and I heard your screams as I was about to come into the room. I am very sorry if I intruded, but," she asked as she looked intently at Huldah, "do you not think that my appearance was opportune?"

"Colonel Rau and Colonel D'Arville. What do they want? I thought D'Arville was still confined to his bed?" Huldah asked, without paying the slightest attention to Madame von Klutus's question.

"Apparently not, Huldah. He is downstairs, but looks pale and weak. But pardon me, I must find Werner. Good-day."

Huldah gave no heed to her sister-in-law, but, sullenly and with a dark frown, left the room and passed along the corridor to the reception-room in which the two soldiers were awaiting Werner von Klutus.

CHAPTER XXX.

KLUTUS IS IMPRESSED.

COLONEL, RAU sat in his full regimentals and was covered with travel stains. Mud was spattered all over his high riding boots, while his buff-colored and silk-slashed trousers and coat showed unmistakable signs of rough riding. Colonel D'Arville sat opposite on a cushioned chair, thin, pale, and white. The two men were actively engaged in conversation of an important kind, judging from the serious looks on their faces. After reflecting some little time, Rau turned to D'Arville and said :

"Colonel, this is a critical time. Duke Bernhard of Weimar and Marshal Horn have decided to join forces, and, with this object in view, have recalled the entire Rhine division across the forest. The advance guard is now at Kappel. All Lorraine is overrun, and the armies of France wait but the signal to cross the Rhine and take possession of the territory which Horn has evacuated. Her soldiers are now on the frontiers of Alsace, ready to co-operate with us. The Duke of Weimar will make a determined effort to check the advance of the Imperialists into Suabia. If he is unsuccessful, Horn will have to face the whole front with his inferior force, and that means desperate work for us all.

"Von Gultlingen is at Kappel and will move on Villingen with his Württembergers in a few days. He will demand its surrender in conformity with the understanding we have with its prefect and the civilians' party, who are desperately

opposed to the guilds and the military party. I have the paper with me, and it is for this reason I came to Rothweil to interview Werner von Klutus."

"For what purpose, Colonel Rau?" asked D'Arville.

"To take him to Kappel with us and away from this city, for several reasons. First, to insure his safety; second, to be sure of him, as we understand that he is wavering in his loyalty and regrets the acts which placed the fortress in our hands; third, to use his influence with Sohertler, who is not only friendly to our cause, but anxious to make the effort to turn over the city of Villingen ostensibly to Duke Julius of Würtemberg, to prevent the siege, but actually to Marshal Horn. The plans are all made and action will be taken at once. If our plans are successful, Villingen will be surprised and captured before it has time to realize what has happened."

"Then you depend entirely upon the civilians to carry out your plan, do you?" asked D'Arville.

"It was quite sufficient at Rothweil."

"But Gerold von Ebertus is not Klutus and is a warrior worthy of our steel. I doubt very much if he will be caught napping," replied D'Arville.

"That is true, but we shall make an effort to surprise the city after a formal demand for surrender and an apparent withdrawal."

The door opened and Huldah walked in without ceremony.

D'Arville rose gallantly and offered her his seat. He inquired for her health and also for that of Lucretia.

"Lucretia! Colonel D'Arville, Lucretia is dead!" she replied.

"Dead! How! When?" he exclaimed in surprise.

"She died at midnight, unconscious to the last," said Huldah as she looked squarely into D'Arville's eyes.

"This is very surprising and sudden. I am grieved to hear it. Accept my sincere sympathy." D'Arville extended his hand and bowed deferentially.

"Sympathy! What for? We all have to die sooner or later. You had a narrow escape yourself, D'Arville. How do you like the idea of being knocked over by a stripling? Great men, you Frenchmen!" sneered Huldah as she contemptuously measured the colonel with an insulting grin.

Rau broke into a loud laugh and winked knowingly at Huldah, as if to encourage her attack on D'Arville. She, however, turned upon Rau and straightened herself before him, exclaiming:

"You! Well, I declare, if you also are not enjoying yourself at Colonel D'Arville's expense. You have forgotten the blow in the face which the same brat struck you at Peterzell, when you tried to be funny at his expense? I believe you carry the mark on your cheek yet."

Huldah came closer to Rau and actually examined his face for traces of the blow.

"And he had nothing but his little hands. There was some excuse for D'Arville, but there is none for you. Of the two, I think the Swede the worse."

It was now D'Arville's turn to laugh. He bowed low, but simply said:

"Thank you."

Rau was angered and turned his back on Huldah. He walked to the window, from which he could see his escort halted in front of the prefecture.

D'Arville and Huldah continued the conversation for a few minutes longer, when Werner von Klutus walked into the apartment. He looked at the group, walked sulkily to Rau, and asked him what business he had with him.

"This," said Rau, as he approached Klutus holding out a paper. "Read it."

"We can undoubtedly get along without women, Colonel Rau," he said as he looked him in the eyes and then at Huldah.

"Yes, especially that kind," replied Rau, as he inclined his head in the direction of Werner's sister.

"Leave the room, Huldah, we have private business to attend to, and will endeavor to transact it without you."

"There was a time when I was very much wanted, gentlemen, but things are different now. Very well, I will retire."

She left the room with long, ungainly strides which emphasized her angular figure.

Klutus read the paper, which was as follows :

"BERNHARD VON GULTLINGEN, Kappel.

"Your Excellency :

"We have carefully digested the advice given us in your letter and have concluded to act as a unit in carrying out the wishes of his Highness, Duke Julius of Würtemberg, it being understood that in consideration of the protection which his Highness offers to the city of Villingen as a frontier fortress to his dominions in Würtemberg, the city shall not be subject to the jurisdiction of Marshal Horn or of any of his officers, but shall be garrisoned and protected by your Highness's troops. It being also understood that in consideration of quiet and cheerful acquiescence and a reasonable contribution, the freedom of its inhabitants, except those who bear arms, shall be rigidly observed, and that all civil and religious rights and privileges shall be undisturbed as now, in every particular. It is also further understood that no portion of the contribution which is to be exacted shall eventually come from any of us who assist in peaceably turning over the city to your protection. With these assurances on your part, we engage to secure entry into the city, with as little bloodshed as possible and at such time as we elect within a week. Accept the assurances of our distinguished regard for you personally and the cause which you ably represent.

"Obediently your humble servant

"for the Committee of Safety,

"SOHERTLER, *Burgmaster.*"

Klutus read the letter carefully, and a grim smile played about his mouth as he folded it up and returned it to Colonel Rau.

"What have I to do with this?" he asked.

"Simply this : you are to prepare at once and go to Kappel to meet Horn and Von Gultlingen. Horn wishes to know from you the particulars which are necessary to carry out the agreements contained in that letter, and to consult you regarding the various persons involved, and the city in general."

"Have you any idea of carrying out the conditions contained in that agreement?" asked Klutus.

"Yes, certainly. Why do you ask?"

"Then why did n't you carry them out here?" again asked Klutus as he straightened himself and looked squarely at Rau.

"The conditions were different, but I have no time to go into details. My orders are imperative and we leave in an hour, Sir Werner."

"Very well, I shall be ready," answered Klutus, as he disappeared through the door.

D'Arville and Rau also left the apartment, the former to go to his quarters, the latter to the Falcon to refresh himself before the long ride ahead of him.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE APPEAL FOR MERCY.

THE morning after the exciting events in the Rathhaus, Gerold, Carolus, Breno, and Von Dougal were assembled in Gerold's sitting-room at Ebertus's Thurm.

The weather, which had been threatening for several days, had broken into a typical up-country storm. The windows rattled with every gust and the icy blast howled and dashed against the leaded glass in the sashes. Rain and hail drove nearly all pedestrians from the streets, and those who ventured out sought sheltering recesses as they made their way through the storm-swept city.

A cheerful log fire flared and sputtered on the ample hearth and radiated an agreeable warmth throughout the room. Seated in a huge armchair behind a large table was Gerold, absorbed in thought. Opposite him sat Carolus, while Breno and Von Dougal occupied chairs a little apart from them. Gerold raised his eyes, and looking at Carolus, said :

" You are certain of the extraordinary precautions adopted to prevent a surprise ? "

" I am, Sir Gerold. Heavy guards are placed at each approach to the gates and walls, and no one can pass except upon written order from me. Trusty men are in command of each detachment and special caution is taken at night. Lumbas, Gurdin, Robertus, and Frey are on guard at the four gates throughout the night, and a special officer of the

guild at each approach to the wall. No one is allowed within a rod of the outer sentries at the approaches under any pretext."

"That is good and seems sufficient. Exercise special care and impress it on every one in command. The principal reason for this conference, as you can easily surmise, is to determine what course of action we shall adopt with reference to the traitors within our walls. It must either be a military trial or a civil trial. The Rath has not been formally dissolved and therefore is in existence. We have, however, usurped its rights and taken forcible possession of the machinery of government. This, it seemed to me, was not only wise, but necessary. Let it so remain for the present. What have you to say, Carolus, as to the disposition of the case?"

"Sir Gerold, there is but one way to dispose of the prisoners, and that is to execute them, after a full hearing and conviction. Such a crime cannot be trifled with at such a time. I am, therefore, in favor of a court-martial composed of all the principal military officers of our city, and also to mete out military justice."

"That is harsh, but it is just," answered Gerold. Then turning to Breno, he asked :

"What is your counsel?"

"To temper justice with mercy," Breno replied, without hesitating an instant. "I am fully aware of the fact that if you court-martial the prisoners, death will be the sentence. This will bring upon you all the undying hatred of those who lean towards the new faith, and arouse into action the forces that are now dormant. Proceed carefully and wisely. Rather suffer your rights to be set aside and give the disposition of the prisoners to the civil authorities than bring a cloud of hornets around your heads at this critical time when the services of every man are needed for common defence."

"What do you mean, Breno? Keep them imprisoned until some future time?"

"Yes, and keep them well guarded," replied the prior.

"Sir Gerold," broke in Carolus, "the plan of action, whether pursued by civil or military authority, must necessarily rest with you. You have the decision, and while I agree in some respects with Breno, I do not believe it wise to trifle about a matter of such moment. Death is the penalty for such a crime, but I agree that it will be best to wait until we see what effect the imprisonment will have, not only on the inhabitants, but also on the enemy, who, no doubt, will hear of the wrecking of their fine plans in due course of time."

Further conversation was brought to an end by a knock at the door. At command, Kuno, the old house-servant, entered.

"If it please your lordship, Madame von Ebertus and Maria, daughter of our former burgomaster, wish to be admitted."

"Very well, Kuno, admit them," said Gerold, as he glanced significantly at those around him.

"I expected this," said Breno, as he rose to escort the women into the room.

Madame von Ebertus entered, pale and worried. Traces of tears were still visible on her refined face. She half supported the nearly swooning form of Maria Sohertler and led her gently to the table, where Gerold and Carolus had risen out of respect to the women. Maria made a determined effort to recover her self-possession, and assisted by Breno was led to a chair. Madame von Ebertus remained standing and sorrowfully faced her son and his friends. In her hand she held a letter with which she abstractedly toyed as her eyes fell before the gaze of Gerold and Carolus. She stood irresolute for a few moments, then quietly raised her eyes to Gerold, whom she addressed :

"Sir Gerold, it little becomes me to intrude upon your deliberations at such a time, but there are circumstances which outweigh every consideration of propriety. I am aware that the fate of the poor miserable and misguided men who have forgotten every manly principle is being discussed, and the

method of punishment being decided upon. I am but a woman and do not feel the depths of anger and resentment that men do. Nor do I view from the same point the wickedness of which the imprisoned ones are guilty ; yet, in the depths of your vengeance and the righteous indignation which such acts bring with them, forget not, that in punishing the guilty, you lay a far greater punishment upon the innocent ones dependent upon them. In the name of Him who forgave His enemies, I implore you to temper your justice with mercy as becomes Christian men and to soften your hearts. Think of the poor innocent women and children who will have to bear the brunt of their misdoings. Think of the widows and orphans who, by one act of yours, will have to go into the world in disgrace, if not in want. Think how many, like this sweet, innocent child, Maria, will be crushed by the burden imposed upon them, before you finally and irrevocably decide upon the disposition of your prisoners."

"Gerold, my son," she continued, as she opened the paper in her hand, "give to the innocent, for I do not plead for the guilty, that ray of hope which for many long years has been your guiding-star, and which to-day has been crowned with joy ; that liberty which rejoices the heart and lifts a great weight from the mind."

She paused as she eagerly scrutinized Gerold's features.

"What do you mean, my mother ? I fail to understand the connection between your plea for mercy and the allusions to me."

Gerold looked at his mother as if to read her very soul. He instinctively felt that something of an extraordinary nature was contained in the letter which Madame von Ebertus held in her hand.

"Read, my son, and in the fulness of your heart, remember the agonies which are gnawing at the hearts of the innocent."

Gerold took the paper and slowly read the contents. The scene was full of painful suspense to the interested group

about the table. They watched intently the play of Gerold's features as he read on, and noted the sudden flush and deathly pallor which overspread his features as he finished the letter. He sank into his chair and covered his face with his hands. He roused himself, glanced at his mother, then turned to Carolus, who, surprised and astonished at the whole proceeding, mechanically took the paper.

"Read it aloud, Sir Carolus," said Madame von Ebertus, as she noted his hesitancy. He began :

"To GEROLD VON EBERTUS, Villingen :

"It is many years since I have had the honor of addressing you. I have had no opportunity during the last two weeks, while in Rothweil, to communicate with you. I have found at last the means of writing and of forwarding to you this letter. I am aware of the state of things in Villingen, and have been brought here against my will to assist in bringing about the fall of our sister city. I am certain from the writings of Burgomaster Sohertler and his misguided associates that they absolutely fail to realize the enormity of their acts or the consequences of their folly. They are inspired rather by weak-heartedness and selfishness than by treacherous thoughts or a desire to betray their city into the hands of the Swedes. The tidings of their exposure and arrest came to this camp to-night, and I am writing in my tent. It is now past midnight and the peasant messenger is waiting without. Villingen will be summoned to surrender, in all probability, in two days. Eleven thousand men are congregating at Kappel and the vicinity, but many of them are destined eastward, probably to Nuremberg.

"I acquaint you also with the sad tidings of the death of my niece Lucretia, your wife, which took place at the prefecture in Rothweil at midnight on Thursday.

"I have the honor to be

"Your obedient and repentant

"WERNER VON KLUTUS."

Like a clap of thunder out of a clear sky, the unexpected tidings rang in the ears of those around the table. Von Dougal, particularly, was dumfounded at the complete change of heart which had apparently taken place in his former chief. Carolus walked quickly to Gerold and pressed his hand. Breno, overcome with the feelings that swelled up from his heart, sank into a chair, while Maria Sohertler looked with hopeful eyes at Madame von Ebertus, whose gaze had never left her son since he read the letter.

Gerold sat in his chair and looked abstractedly at the floor. Two tears coursed down his cheeks as he again reviewed his past life, filled with danger, sorrow, and regret. His mind again reverted to the scenes of twenty years before, when hope, youth, and love filled his life with sunshine and gladness. Oh! what dreams of happiness then filled his days and crowned his flights of fancy! The deep halcyon repose which his future seemed to hold was tinted with the rosy glow of love and honest endeavor. He saw again his day-dreams of youth with a lovely and winsome wife at his side, to whom he confided his inmost thoughts, and in whom was centred his universe. Then, when a son and heir was brought to him, his cup of happiness seemed to overflow. Often, in meditative moods, did he wonder whether the measure of anyone's happiness could be so complete. Again, the dark days of sorrow came to him, and the angel of goodness turned to a demon of destruction. His wanderings, his many years on the tented field floated before his vision, and the death which he had sought in many a pitched battle hovered about him again. He sat in his chair, oblivious of his surroundings, and of those nearest his heart, who were intently watching the play of his features.

Madame von Ebertus noiselessly went to the door and softly opened it. Bertha and Egon entered. Quickly passing again to the table, she spoke to Gerold:

"Behold, Gerold von Ebertus, your son Egon."

As in a dream, Gerold half rose from his chair and con-

vulsively grasped the supports. He was deathly pale, but with a great effort rose to his feet and walked to his son's side. He laid his hands on his head and said :

"Egon, my son, welcome to the house of your fathers. You gladden my heart and give joy to my life."

The dramatic scene made a deep and lasting impression upon every one present. Tears of joy trickled down the cheeks of Madame von Ebertus as she noted the exalted mien of her son, and saw the deep happiness which gleamed in the depths of his fine eyes. Carolus, visibly overcome, walked to the window to hide his emotions and looked into the storm which howled without.

Von Dougal made no pretence of hiding his feelings, and quickly grasped the boy's hand. Egon turned also, overcome by the situation, hid his face on his friend's breast and wept.

Gerold turned to his mother, at whose side Bertha stood with a desperate effort at composure, and pointed to the cowering and heartbroken daughter of the Burgomaster.

"It is God's will. Never shall I suffer her and those like her to feel the pangs of pain and sorrow when happiness and heart's content beam on me in such a measure. Rather would I tear my heart from my bosom than to pollute such a day with bitterness or even reproach. For the blessings which God in His infinite mercy has bestowed upon me, I declare that her father and his associates shall be tried before a civil court and that an opportunity shall be given them to expiate their crime by sincere and evident repentance."

Maria fell on her knees before Gerold and kissed his hands, while tears coursed down her fair cheeks. Bertha hid her face on Madame von Ebertus's bosom and wept, as Breno, thoroughly aroused with enthusiasm for God's mercy and goodness, offered blessings upon those assembled, and fervently prayed with an overflowing heart for a continuance of the happiness which enshrined his friend.

CHAPTER XXXII.

MADAME'S DISCOVERY.

TWO days passed in peace and quiet and no move was made by the gathering host at Kappel and the surrounding districts. The fierce storm which had swept across the uplands expended its force and the icy blast was followed by a sudden rise in the temperature. Great banks of fog rolled down from the forest and obscured the beautiful panorama of hill and plain. At times it was so dense that objects scarcely a rod away could be distinguished only with difficulty.

At Carolus's house, Bertha stood idly looking out at the gray mists. She pensively leaned her head against the window-frame as she clasped her hands or abstractedly toyed with the leaden tracery of the oriel window. Her thoughts were far away as she looked upward through the leaded glass in the casement. Far away into the future her mind was carrying her and her face beamed with happiness as she lingered fondly over the possibilities her fancy wrought. Her bright dreams abruptly ended as other thoughts crowded into her mind. Sharp, quick twinges of pain caused her to start suddenly as she reverted to the plain and prosaic earthly conditions which surrounded her. Involuntarily she smiled at her flights of fancy and then gently sighed as she turned from the window and said, half audibly :

"Three days ! And the dreams which for years have been my hope, are suddenly resolved into possibilities. The barrier which seemed so insurmountable is removed and the

way is open to effect the consummation of my heart's desire. Dead ! That faithless woman, who had well-nigh ruined his life ! Removed, the obstacle which had hindered his way to happiness and cast its baleful shadows upon me ! Yet does my love, in its intensity, not fly with joyous wings into the realms of space, but seems to broaden and expand into softer and harmonious peacefulness. Far, far in the past seems that resentment which in my less mature years burdened my heart and embittered my mind. For while yet a child in years did I give to him my heart and soul, and the pure fountain of my dreams has flowed year after year, only to deepen and strengthen the current of my love. Free at last ! and with his freedom the hope of his future, his son again brought to him to gladden his heart ! Ah, Gerold ! Do you realize the wealth of devotion which wells in my heart ? Do you understand the depth of love which rolls in endless waves from my soul ? Free ! ”

She seemed to fear her own flights of imagination and convulsively drew herself together at the thought of the tremendous distance at which she placed Gerold above her. Again she smiled at the excess of her feelings as she paced slowly up and down the apartment. Bertha was a singularly striking and attractive woman when her features were agitated with the beauty of her thoughts. Her classic face was aglow with the intensity of her feelings and her deep, violet eyes sparkled and shone like stars. Her bosom heaved and as she walked, her strong, yet graceful form revealed the supple lines of beauty. Absorbed in her thoughts and oblivious of everything else she paced up and down the apartment for some time.

At length, a slow and deliberate step was heard, and, a moment later came a knock upon the door of the room. Bertha collected herself with an effort and bade the newcomer enter.

Madame von Ebertus opened the door and smilingly greeted her :

"Good morning Bertha, are you busy, and am I intruding?"

"Not at all, Madame. Pray come in and make yourself at home," she returned, as she assisted the older woman with her wraps.

"It is very disagreeable out, so I wrapped myself rather warmly," said Madame von Ebertus as she looked keenly at the young woman.

Bertha was slightly bewildered at the unexpected call and wondered what could be the explanation of the unusual visit. She busied herself with placing the heavy wraps on a divan, then, bringing the most comfortable chair to the fire for the elderly woman, she sat down on a low footstool, crossed her hands in her lap and gazed with some trepidation into the face of Madame von Ebertus.

"Bertha, you are wondering at my unexpected visit, are you not?" she inquired as she bent slightly towards the girl.

Taken somewhat aback at the question, for which she was altogether unprepared, Bertha contented herself with a little gasp, a slight blush, and a droop of her head.

"I thought so, but you must not feel agitated at the question, my dear girl," she continued as she took Bertha's hand and bent over her fair head.

"I did not come here to cause you any inconvenience or to make you uncomfortable, as you evidently are, but I wanted to have a talk with you. You have not visited us since the day Egon returned to his father's roof, and, although Anna has asked you twice to come, you have not shown yourself at Ebertus's Thurm. What is the reason Bertha? Has anything disturbed you, or has the sorrowful scene which we all witnessed affected you so much? Tell me, Bertha!" she concluded as she stroked the delicate hand she held in her own.

"No, Madame, nothing has disturbed me, only I thought that the happiness which has entered your house ought not to be disturbed by outsiders, be they ever so welcome."

Bertha again lapsed into blushes, and again dropped her head. Madame von Ebertus looked intently at the girl, and seemed to hesitate between two conflicting conclusions. For some moments they remained in silence. Madame von Ebertus gazed into the fire, and her thoughts seemed to be far away from her surroundings. She collected herself, finally, and placing her hand tenderly under the chin of the half-reclining girl, turned her face to her. Slowly the big, dreamy eyes raised themselves to the elderly woman, and seemed to read the very depths of her thoughts. Madame von Ebertus smiled faintly as she looked at Bertha :

"You are a strange girl and hard to understand, but I read you clearly, and think I divine your thoughts."

Bertha again drooped her head, for there was something in the kind, steady look bent upon her, that stirred and alarmed her greatly. She became strangely confused, and was in evident bewilderment.

Madame von Ebertus gazed steadily at her, and then allowed the girl's hand to slip from her grasp. She looked into the fire again, and abstractedly toyed with the fringe on her bodice.

The situation was becoming intensely trying to Bertha. Alarmed at the chance of disclosing her secret, and confused at the unexpected development of her thoughts of only a short half-hour before, she was momentarily on the verge of breaking down. She roused all the latent force of her nature to suppress the evidences of her love, and had nearly succeeded in her effort, when Madame von Ebertus again spoke to her.

"Bertha, tell me, without reservation, and speak from your heart, as you would to your beloved mother were she living, do you love my son?"

A convulsive cry broke from the girl, she drew her hands quickly to her face and pressed her temples as if to bury them there. Her bosom heaved, and she gasped as if mortally wounded, while her body swayed to and fro as if in pain.

Gerold's mother looked at her with keen eyes and noted every move. She bent eagerly over the agitated girl, and breathlessly awaited her answer. Bertha had ceased to move, but sat like a figure carved from marble. The blood rushed from her face and she was deathly white. Slowly she moved her hands from her face to her questioner, and with a pathetic, childlike, and entreating look, answered :

"Yes, I have always loved him." Then, in the full knowledge of the end of her secret, she quickly arose, tottered a few steps, and again pressing her hands to her head, continued :

"Oh, God, what have I done? Why have I been thus tried? Why has my secret been thus unwillingly wrung from my very soul?" She stood still, dropped her hands, and turned to Madame von Ebertus, as she concluded :

"Why, Madame, oh why do you thus torture me? Do you not see that it is breaking my heart to wrest the truth thus forcibly from me? Ah, that I could have been left alone with my love and cherished it from the gaze of those who cannot understand it!"

The elderly woman rose from her chair, and, as she approached Bertha, extended her hands to her. With a look of infinite love and affection, she clasped the agonized girl to her bosom, and said :

"Because it has bloomed in secret long enough, dear child ; because I love you as I love my son ; because I wish you to be happy, and see your love fulfilled, for Gerold loves you even as you love him."

A sharp cry broke from the lips of the girl, as she swooned in the arms of Gerold's mother, who tenderly laid her on the divan, and proceeded in the most practical and deliberate manner to restore her to consciousness, without summoning anyone to witness the unlooked for and startling ending of the interview.

Madame von Ebertus worked diligently over the unconscious girl, and after a considerable length of time, had the

satisfaction of seeing her charge respond to the treatment which she applied. She feared the return of consciousness, and the probable continuance of the painful scene which had just been enacted, as she looked lovingly at the great eyes, which opened and closed at intervals in semi-stupor. She smoothed the fair forehead, as she half leaned across her patient, and when Bertha lapsed into quiet slumber, she gently put on her wraps, and softly left the apartment, and returned to Ebertus's Thurm.

An hour later she returned, and again entered the room. In an adjoining room, Gerold and Carolus were conversing in subdued voices. Every few moments Gerold looked with troubled eyes at the door, and listened intently for something. Carolus sat in a large chair, his hands stuck into his belt, and his legs stretched to their full length in front of him. He followed the movements of Gerold with smiling eyes, and beamed on him with a world of deep affection.

There was something noble in the friendship of these two men. Differing widely in thought and action, even opposed to one another in the conduct of affairs, diametrically opposite to each other in matters appertaining to the spiritual welfare of themselves and those about them, yet they were always considerate of each other's deep-seated convictions. Gerold was the scholar, absorbed in metaphysics, romantic yet analytical, of advanced opinions yet clinging tenaciously to the romance of the past; while Carolus was the soldier, living in the present, practical to a degree, at times erratic, an uncompromising disciplinarian, with little thought of, and no respect for ancient erudition—the progressive, hearty man of his day.

Yet Gerold was the leader, the experienced tactician and warrior, while Carolus was the theorist. One had the experience of men and affairs, gained against his own wishes, a victim of curious circumstances, while the other largely lacked the keen insight into men and motives, but was alive to events, and willingly thrust his personality whenever and

wherever he felt it his duty thus to impose it. Both men stood upon the common ground of hero-worship and both loved their country and its traditions with intense love. The strength of character of each was clearly manifest to the other, and the respect which strong personalities always engender had grown into deep and lasting friendship.

Thus did these two men develop in each other's society by the sheer force of their natures. The troublesome times and the many dangers which hovered over them brought them more closely together than ever. Carolus revelled in the fact that the duties which now rested upon his friend, and which he was mainly responsible for having thrust upon him, drew Gerold away from the calm contemplation into which he had lapsed during the past few years, and unceremoniously posted him in the field of personal activity which, to Carolus's mind, was the only one fit for his abilities.

Thus he calmly and smilingly contemplated his friend as he uneasily moved to and fro in eager expectation. A new and powerful interest now centred in Gerold as Carolus suddenly reflected upon the circumstance which had brought them together this dark and gloomy morning. He had been summoned to Ebertus's Thurm and, without preparation, was made cognizant of the scene which had taken place between Madame von Ebertus and his sister. With even more than his usual practical demeanor, he accepted the situation as a perfectly natural result, although he had never before given the subject more than a passing thought; it was a chance so remote, that speculation upon it had seemed superfluous.

To him, Bertha was the good sister, the household angel whom he worshipped for her considerate thoughtfulness and constant care for his comfort and ease. For romantic flights and secret, undying love for anyone, Carolus had never credited her with the capacity, and this phase of her character occasioned him more surprise than the announcement of the fact of her love for Gerold.

With a certain combination of respect, affection, and amused satisfaction, he leaned back in his chair and idly rolled his huge spurs across the bare floor.

His reflections were brought to a sudden close by the appearance of Madame von Ebertus, who beckoned Gerold to her. She whispered something in his ear and held the door ajar for her son.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE FESTIVITIES RUDELY DISTURBED.

GEROLD softly entered the room where Bertha still lay in slowly returning consciousness. He sat on the low stool which his mother had left but a moment before and gazed tenderly and earnestly at the pale face before him. He took her hand and held it in his warm clasp as a subdued sigh escaped from her partly open lips. She turned her head, opened her eyes, and her gaze fell upon the attentive form of Gerold bending slightly over her. Quietly her eyes contemplated the manly features, then closed again as if the face hovering over her were merely a dream, a phantom from the mists which still partially obscured her mental vision. Again she sighed and a convulsive twitching agitated her. Again her beautiful eyes opened upon Gerold, and again she lapsed into a semi-stupor. Thus she lay, while Gerold softly stroked her hand and gazed intently upon her face. A warm flush came to her face and mounted to the roots of her hair. Her bosom heaved, and her lips moved with inarticulate sound as she finally opened her eyes and looked steadfastly at Gerold. Her face was pitiable to behold as she gradually recovered her faculties and realized the full significance of the scene. The flush deepened into crimson and her agitation was intense as she again closed her eyes and quietly reflected on the meaning of it all.

Gerold had not uttered a word. His thoughts fluctuated between alarm for Bertha's condition and extreme happiness.

Silently he stroked her hand and bent the most affectionate and loving glances at the reclining girl. Not the past, with its sorrow and bitterness, not the years of exile and wandering, not the hovering of welcome death amid the frightful years of war came to his mind, but again the glowing future, again the rosy-hued dreams of happiness which years before had floated before his vision and again the warm pulsations of love tore through the heart of this strong man. His face was almost transfigured with joy as the crimson tell-tale of consciousness mounted to Bertha's brow.

He controlled himself with an effort and awaited the moment when the girl was prepared to listen to him. Thus the minutes sped by for Gerold while Bertha was gradually coming to a full realization of what the scene meant for her.

She again opened her eyes, and from their depths, Gerold read that undying emotion which has transcended all human emotions and will roll on to eternity. Gerold rose to his feet, then passing his hand across his forehead as if to reassure himself, bent down and kissed the fair face turned to him.

"Bertha! I am here and I shall always be where you are. Do you understand me and realize what I say?"

She looked at him steadily, and, as from the depths of her soul two tears welled into her eyes and rested like two glistening brilliants in the corners.

"Yes, I understand and realize, and I am very happy."

Then unable to control herself longer, she burst into passionate tears as she pressed Gerold's hand which still held her own.

Thus they remained, while the tears gave way to smiles of happiness, and the strong features of Gerold resolved themselves from uncertainty into acute joy.

Bertha finally sat up with her head reclining on Gerold's breast. They had much to say to each other and both were oblivious of time, of their surroundings, and of the strange conditions which had brought them so unexpectedly together.

In the adjoining room, Madame von Ebertus and Carolus

were conversing with forced effort, their thoughts being upon the two who were nearest their hearts and ever present in their minds.

In the midst of the heartfelt congratulations which fairly overwhelmed the happy couple, after Madame von Ebertus, who seemed to have arrived at the zenith of her happiness, had imparted the welcome news to Von Dougal, Anna, and Breno, a courier arrived at Ebertus's Thurm with the startling intelligence that a captain with three men of Von Gultlingen's command had come to the St. Francis Gate and summoned the city to surrender.

The festive scene came to a speedy close as Gerold, Carolus, and Von Dougal departed for headquarters to reply personally to the demands of Von Gultlingen. Carolus in complete armor, stern and defiant, received the Würtemberg officer, the courier of Von Gultlingen, at the outer gate of the St. Francis Tower. He coldly demanded the reason for his unwelcome visit and, in reply, received a sealed package addressed to the commandant of Villingen.

Carolus broke the seal and hastily scanned the communication, which read as follows :

" TO THE COMMANDANT OF VILLINGEN :

" Duke Julius of Würtemberg, as director of the Evangelical alliance of Suabia, foreseeing the extreme dangers to which the frontier fortress of Villingen is exposed, hereby offers to take the city under his protection and thus prevent its falling into the hands of the foreign invader. Quiet and cheerful acquiescence and a reasonable contribution will ensure the safety of the city of Villingen, and to its inhabitants freedom of religious worship and a recognition of the rights and privileges enjoyed in the past.

" Failure to comply within twenty-four hours will bring a body of ten thousand men before its walls and forcible possession will be taken.

" For His Grace of Würtemberg,

" BERNHARD VON GULTLINGEN."

Carolus looked with undisguised scorn on the paper, and then at the captain and his men who were gathered under the white flag attached to a lance. With a grim smile he spoke to Robertus who was at his side with a squad of men.

"Tell the doughty captain that the communication will be taken to Sir Gerold von Ebertus, and to await an answer."

Without deigning to notice the bearer of the paper, Carolus turned on his heel and entered the great gate of the fortress.

A company of pikemen was posted immediately behind the entrance and as Carolus passed them, every eye was upon him. The amused and scornful look upon his face was highly reassuring to the men, and a smile settled on every face when he ascended the stone steps which led to the headquarters above.

Carolus walked into the room where Gerold, Lumbas, Von Dougal, Gurdin, and a number of officers were congregated and handed the paper to Sir Gerold. With a grim smile on his face, he said :

"Bernhard von Gultlingen wishes to try his luck again. He probably thinks the pen is mightier than the sword and having failed with the latter a few days since, presumes to address you with this, to-day."

He handed the summons to surrender to his chief and watched Gerold closely as he read it.

Gerold calmly took the paper and read it carefully. When he had finished it, he smiled at Carolus and handing it back to his chief officer, said :

"Read it Carolus, to the gentlemen assembled."

As Carolus finished reading the paper, Sir Gerold addressed the officers present :

"You have heard the contents of this communication. It reads wonderfully like the paper which was discovered in Provence's desk by Heinrich Vogel. It is for us to decide whether we shall submit to Duke Julius of Würtemberg and his allies, or decline the proffered protection. I need scarcely

ask what your answer will be and it remains only to frame the proper reply. Sir Carolus, prepare a suitable reply and when ready, bring it to us for approval."

Gerold turned in his seat and conversed with Von Dougal and Rheinhold after he had given some instructions to Lumbas.

Rheinhold brought decanters and glasses and the party of officers drank numerous litres while awaiting the drafting of the reply which Carolus was preparing in an adjoining room.

The day was drawing to a close and the twilight was falling upon the highlands. The gloom and fog disappeared under the brilliant autumn sun and the temperature again fell many degrees. The officers were amusing themselves with speculations as to the next move of the Würtembergers and the decanters were emptied and filled with wonderful regularity, while awaiting Carolus's draft of the reply to Von Gultlingen.

After some further delay, Carolus returned to the room and said :

"Sir Gerold, I have drafted two or three replies, but after mature consideration, I have decided to simplify the answer and to make it as brief as possible."

He read :

"TO BERNHARD VON GULTLINGEN :

"Without sanction of His Majesty of Austria, under whose protection the city of Villingen has stood for upwards of three hundred years, I cannot consider the question of placing it under your protection. The garrison and inhabitants of Villingen will defend themselves to the last, if attacked."

Gerold took the paper and addressed his officers :

"Shall this reply be given to the courier below?"

A thundering affirmation greeted his question.

"This is in accordance with my feelings and thus shall it be."

He took a quill and signed his full name and title to the document, sealed it and gave it to Carolus. It was placed in the hands of the Würtemberg captain, who a few moments later, sped onward to Kappel in the gathering gloom of the November night.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE ADVANCE OF THE CONQUEROR.

AT Kappel there was great activity amongst the allies. Every house, cottage, barn, and even the sheds and temporary buildings within a radius of a mile or more were taxed to their utmost capacity. Camp-fires glowed by the hundreds in fields, belts of wood and below the overhanging cliffs which rose abruptly from the plain to the east of the little town. The unfortunate inhabitants were ruthlessly ejected from their own habitations, to make quarters for the officers and soldiers of the allied troops. Everything of value was appropriated with the usual informality of the heartless invaders, and numerous were the deeds of violence and rapine.

At a tavern situated on the edge of the town, Marshal Horn, who had arrived only a few hours before, set up his headquarters and immediately called together the principal officers of the forces who were making a junction at Kappel.

In the principal room of the modest little tavern, the Swedish Marshal was seated in a straight-backed oak chair, at a large table, absorbed in a number of despatches and papers which awaited his attention. A score or more of officers surrounded the table and all were busily engaged in conversation conducted in a subdued voice, in deference to their chief. Rau and Von Gultlingen were in a group with one French and two Scotch officers. Every few minutes, one or the other cast a glance at the figure of Marshal Horn, as

he rapidly perused the papers before him and placed them in regular succession at his elbow as he finished with each one.

Horn finally completed his task, dictated a few sentences to a secretary, and then taking off his huge, soft felt hat, decorated with red plumes, laid it on the table in front of him. Turning to Rau, he asked :

"Any tidings from Villingen?"

"None, Marshal. There has scarcely been time enough for an answer or a return of the courier," replied Rau, as he walked to his chief's side.

"Are you prepared to move forward immediately, Colonel?" he asked again.

"Within an hour. I have four thousand men, Von Gultingen has two, and Leslie and Brentier each two, making seven thousand infantry, seven hundred cavalry, and three hundred artillery, besides drivers and attendants."

"Attend me in a quarter of an hour in the small room above," commanded Horn, as he rose to leave the room.

The stalwart figure of the Swede was picturesque as he walked with great strides to the door which led to the rooms above. Over six feet in height, with massive shoulders, of erect military carriage, he presented a fine subject for a picture. He had well chiselled, mobile features, sparkling blue eyes, and a complexion which only outdoor exercise and exposure to the elements can produce, and his figure and face were set off by long, wavy locks of almost yellow hair. His moustache and beard were well cared for and in the height of fashion. Clad in the regulation buff leather and green silk slashings, with his boots pulled high up, he was every inch a warrior, the fame of whose valorous exploits was spread throughout the land.

Horn represented the best elements of the invaders who had spread over Germany's fair plains. Rigorous but charitable, devout but not bigoted, he frowned upon every form of oppression by his inferior officers. Relentless alike to friends and foes for the excesses which seemed an almost

universal accompaniment to the conduct of the war of invasion, he kept the troops under his immediate command well in hand and punished with severity every breach of morality or vicious deed which came to his notice.

The natural consequence was, that when he withdrew his army from the Rhine valley, the inhabitants grew fearful of the soldiers of the Duke of Lorraine and actually regretted the disappearance of the Marshal and his allies. A large detachment had arrived in Kappel early in the afternoon, accompanied by the usual retinue of camp followers, the vultures of the invasion, who looted, burned, robbed, maltreated and visited every form of cruelty upon the hapless peasants and burghers whom the Swedes had passed by unmolested.

Everywhere about the town, the soldier held forth. In houses, barns, around the camp-fires, noisy shouts and songs broke upon the night air. The lute and the guitar formed an accompaniment to the guttural tones of the Swedes and the higher pitched voices of the Frenchmen, while the wheezy, melancholy and mirthless bagpipe seemed to inspire a sort of wild frenzy among the soulless and unmusical semi-barbarians from Scotland, whose bare knees and big feet moved with accentuated and grotesque contortions in the dance, quite as though they had not tramped five weary leagues that very day, over rocky cut and mountain incline.

The characteristics of the motley gathering were sharply delineated, even under the levelling and character-destroying influences of a camp-fire on foreign soil. The Swede, tall, graceful, and imposing, full of restraint and composure; the Frenchman, undersized, of lithe, quick movement, noisy and frivolous; the German, broad-shouldered and deep-chested, collected and observant, and the Scotchman, awkward, raw-boned and rough, forever quarrelling, dancing and drinking. National characteristics were plainly discernible and were unmistakable even in that illy assorted gathering of soldiers where duty, necessity, gain, and numerous other good and

bad motives moved them on the chess-board of fate or fortune.

The mercenary could be had for a price, either for or against the reformed religion, politics, individual or collective, good or harmful, for any purpose under the sun, provided the stated stipend were forthcoming, with something additional in the shape of appropriated belongings of a fallen comrade or a pro rata division of the plunder which fell to the higher officers who commanded them.

Many a soldier, fighting for principle and reform, under the banner of the Lion of the North, was weighted down with jewels and coins of great value, obtained by robbery and murder, and when over-burdened to such an extent that it proved a hardship to drag it along, he carefully "cached" it, in the hope of returning some day and getting it into his possession, without fear of losing his treasure and his life by the knife of some gallant comrade in arms.

When the babel of sounds was at the highest, a courier and several men clattered through the principal street of the town. They kept on despite the shouts, howls, and missiles thrown at them from the various groups through which they passed. Arriving at the door of the tavern, the courier vaulted out of his saddle and quickly entered the building. Passing through the knots of officers and saluting stiffly, he handed Bernhard von Gultlingen a package.

Von Gultlingen looked at him and broke the seal, remarking :

"You have taken a long time to perform this errand."

"I was detained over an hour, and also had a slight accident," he replied as he again saluted.

"You may go," replied Von Gultlingen, as he hastily read the answer to the summons sent to Villingen for surrender.

He bit his lip and stroked his beard as he finished the reply, then turned it over to Colonel Rau, as he approached, saying :

"Polite, anyway, Rau ! eh? But just about what I expected. An 'if-you-want-us, come-and-get-us' sort of an answer. We shall have to move on that stubborn little burg to-morrow."

"Let us take the answer to the Marshal and get our orders. That is about what he meant by asking me to attend him in a quarter of an hour," answered Rau.

Together the Würtemberger and the Swede ascended the steps and were in consultation with Marshal Horn in a few minutes.

"Just what I expected," said he, as he finished the message. "Sir Gerold von Ebertus is made of different stuff from most of these uplanders. He will not only do what he says, but will make a defence that will astonish you. I wish you luck, gentlemen. Move early and cut off all approaches ; take all your artillery with you and make a good impression on the stiff-backed Imperialists. I shall be in Singen and shall expect to hear from you in a few days. Take your full divisions with you and prepare to sit down on that little egg until something is hatched. *Au revoir*, gentlemen."

Without further ado, he dismissed the two officers and quietly and deliberately prepared to retire.

A few hours later, the heavy rumble of artillery passing over the frozen ground, disturbed the lighter sleepers of the allied armies encamped at Kappel. Field and siege guns of various patterns, sizes, and efficiency passed through the town, accompanied by ammunition, wagons, and trains. Upwards of seventy-five guns were thus dispatched in a southwesterly direction, long before the first streaks of dawn lined the eastern horizon. The heavy infantry joined the long procession later, and finally, as the dawn broke upon hill and plain, the cavalry was set in motion. Colonel Rau and Bernhard von Gultlingen, Colonels Leslie and Brentier, and a staff of officers brought up the rear. Eight thousand allied troops were moving on Villingen and the hopes of the two principal commanders were high, in the full expectation

that their apparently invincible army would impress the defiant soldiers within the city's walls with a feeling of despair, and the non-combatants with such terror, as to influence or weaken the defence which was expected and for which they were prepared. Hour after hour, the formidable mass moved in close column and when the sun loomed upon the eastern horizon, the cavalry and light infantry were within two leagues of the devoted city.

CHAPTER XXXV.

THE BEGINNING OF THE SIEGE.

A SMALL reconnoitring party of cavalry under Robertus, patrolling beyond the stone bridge of the Brigach, came upon the advance guard of the enemy early in the morning. From a little hillock they discerned the long moving train as it wended its way slowly and deliberately towards Villingen. Robertus intently watched the advancing cloud of horsemen for some minutes and then turning to a trooper at his side despatched him to Baldus Gurdin who occupied the bridge over the deep and swift-flowing stream.

On a little rise, a few hundred yards back of the bridge, Franciscus Lumbas had posted a few field-pieces which commanded the approaches to the bridge.

Robertus gave orders to retreat slowly as the enemy's advance noted his presence, and in a short quarter of an hour he passed over the bridge. A couple of hundred riders approached within range of Lumbas's field-pieces and immediately the battery spouted forth its venomous shafts of flame and destruction. Gurdin, in the depression, ordered his men back and with his own hands ignited the fuse which connected with the mine beneath the stone structure. A few seconds later, the solidly built bridge flew into the air, amid a cloud of smoke, dust and débris which obscured everything within a radius of a couple of hundred yards.

The Swedish horse was within a few yards of the bridge and the detonation, shock, and flying débris caused great

havoc among the leaders of the rapidly moving troopers. A dozen or more mounted men slid out of their saddles, killed, maimed, or stunned, while many riderless horses galloped in all directions in headlong flight. Again the field-pieces belched forth their fire into the now solid columns of horsemen augmented by the forward movements of the long procession of horsemen.

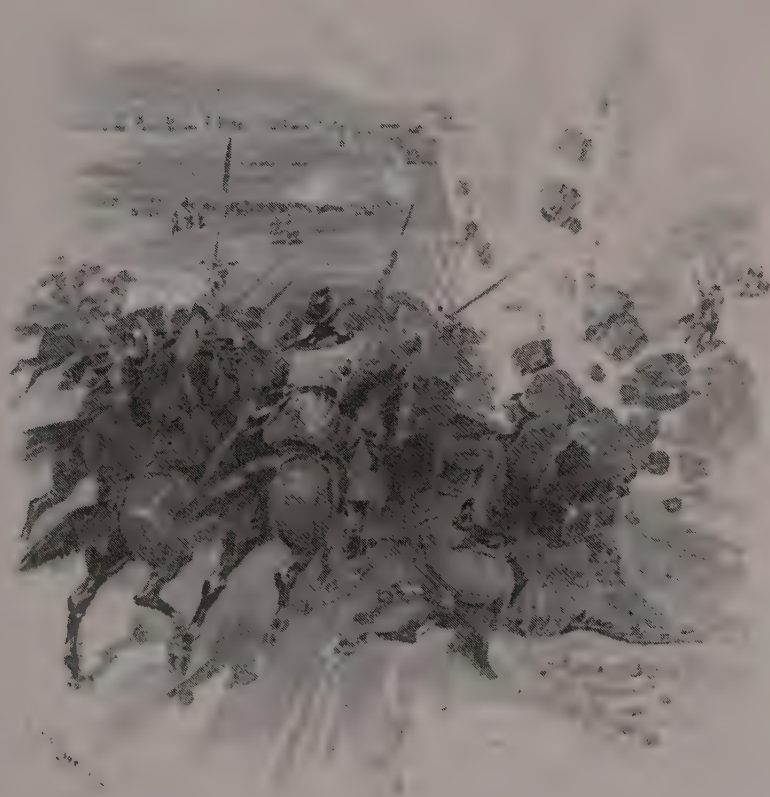
Spreading out like a fan from the road whence they were moving the cavalry sought a convenient ford and endeavored to cut off the retreat of the small battery which thundered persistently into the dense masses of mounted men. Gurdin separated his heavy cavalrymen and deployed them so as to intercept the adventurous Swedish riders who plunged into the icy water at a dozen different points. Not a Swede crossed alive. Gurdin above and Robertus below made short work of the bold men and several dozen paid the penalty for their rashness with their lives.

With less than one hundred men, Gurdin and Robertus checked the whole force of the invaders for over half an hour and only retired when the musketeers were brought to the opposite side of the stream. Lumbas poured shot and shell into the ranks of the enemy over the heads of the Villingen horsemen and gave orders to retire only when the passage of the Brigach was no longer in dispute. Again Robertus and Gurdin moved up and down the shelving banks of the stream, keeping the few riders busily engaged while Lumbas quickly retreated to the gates of the city.

This movement was successfully accomplished and a few minutes later, Gurdin and Robertus with their riders also entered the Franciscan Gate. A thunderous welcome awaited the enemy's horsemen who stormed up to the gates of the city but a few hundred yards behind the rear-guard of the retreating troopers.

A wide sheet of flame broke from the outer and inner walls which hurled death and destruction into the ranks of the storming cavalry. Away they whirled, the remnant of

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A few seconds later, the solidly built bridge flew into the air.
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the advance, and in a perfect panic they fled back and across the stream which it had cost them so many lives to pass. The heavier guns from the walls emphasized their flight and when the range was found, the whole body of the enemy, cavalry and infantry, were forced to retire precipitately before the murderous shells that were exploding in their midst with unceasing regularity and precision.

Rau and Von Gultlingen noted the whole scene from a neighboring elevation and the choleric Swedish Colonel fumed and cursed at the foolhardiness of their own troops. Von Gultlingen was ordered to the south of the city, where he arrived after a long detour and well out of range of the heavy guns of the fortress. Leslie and Brentier took positions east and west respectively, augmented by detachments of Württembergers. The heavy guns were brought up later and in an hour were brought to bear upon the city and its defences.

A heavy artillery duel was thus kept in progress during the first few hours of the siege and the walls of the fortress were at times completely shrouded in smoke. Earthworks were thrown up in the various quarters where the heavy siege-pieces were posted and when the sun was setting, the allies were fairly shielded behind the defences thrown up during the day. As darkness closed upon the uplands, the firing ceased and only a desultory shot now and then broke upon the stillness of the night.

The city was entirely surrounded and every approach was closely guarded. Gun after gun was brought into position and the shovel and the pick were industriously kept at work during the long hours of the winter night. Every advantage of position was taken by Colonel Rau and before morning, seventy guns were in position to continue the bombardment. Eight guns had been disabled and nearly three hundred men killed and wounded during the first eventful day of the siege of Villingen.

With the earliest dawn, the furious cannonading was con-

tinued. The direction whence the shot and shell were hurled at the city made it evident that a breach was intended, both in the outer and inner walls of the city at the Franciscan Gate. It was also evident that a number of the heaviest guns were concentrated at a point just beyond the stone bridge for the possession of which such a sharp, brief fight had been made the day before.

The ponderous missiles crashed and tore great gaps in the lighter masonry of the outer wall and gate, and, after a half hour's vain endeavor to serve the guns on the walls, Gerold gave orders to remove them to a point a few hundred yards farther south and away from the hail of shot and shell which was centered at the gate, tower, and wall. With great daring and with death hovering around them, the artillerymen finally succeeded, but not until a number of their comrades had fallen and several guns were rendered useless.

In the midst of the men who were working with might and main, Lumbas stood directing the operations. Solid shot whistled and struck about him everywhere—huge pieces of masonry and tiles from the edges and roof of the subordinate tower flew past him and dropped everywhere around him, yet he stood his ground until the last serviceable gun was safely drawn away by huge ropes.

The day was breaking, and while the earthworks could not be distinguished from behind which the great cannons were slowly but gradually reducing the outer works, yet the incessant flash of the guns gave the defenders the necessary aim to begin operations. Lumbas ordered all guns to be directed to the particular works which were creating so much havoc, and when all was in readiness, gave the signal. A murderous fire from nearly thirty guns broke simultaneously upon the morning and in ten minutes the battery in the earthworks was silenced. The fire had been deadly. The concentration and quick service had produced the result. A number of the heaviest guns had been dismantled or rendered useless.

In the meantime, the batteries at the other points continued and the same tactics were repeated at the three other towers and gates of the city. Red-hot shot was hurled into the city. Fires broke out in half a dozen different small buildings and barns, and were burning fiercely. The inhabitants turned to the extinguishing of these dangerous fires and the women and even children lent a hand at covering the living balls of fire as they struck, with soaked skins and buckets of water. Gradually the fires burned out and the danger somewhat abated.

Gerold assumed command at the Franciscan Gate and Tower, where the enemy evidently intended to make a breach, to be followed by an assault. Carefully husbanding the strength of his men, he directed operations, and every two hours relieved them from the terrific fire to which they were exposed.

So persistent was the furious cannonading directed at the earthworks that only a shot now and then responded, and, in most cases, flew wide of the point which it was intended to breach.

As the morning broke, large parties of men and horses could be seen dragging additional field and siege guns to the earthworks and upon them, Gerold ordered the longer range guns directed. The mortars were now placed in position, and in a short space of time, the huge shells burst in the midst of the allies as they worked desperately to get their guns under cover. With a grim smile Gerold noted the deadly aim of his artillery. He gave orders to prevent the placing of the enemy's guns at all hazards and descending to the court below, mounted his horse and galloped rapidly to the St. John Gate, accompanied by Rheinhold and Gurdin.

As the trio passed through the city, the effects of the bombardment were plainly noticeable on many sides. Deathlike stillness prevailed everywhere and the streets were practically deserted. Shutters were drawn and scarcely a burgher was visible. A furtive look out of a partly-opened door or the

swiftly-moving figure of an inhabitant as he gingerly crossed an alley, street, or square, was all that could be noticed. The deep boom of the guns and an occasional crash of a solid shot could be heard. As Gerold rode on, a shot struck the upper windows of a house barely ten paces ahead of him. a shower of glass fell to the pavement, almost at the hoofs of Gerold's horse, and a series of shrieks rent the air. Almost immediately thereafter, the women and children of the house fled, panic stricken, out of doors and with loud cries ran towards the house opposite.

Gerold stopped to calm their fears and advised them to re-enter their habitation. His cool, collected manner reassured the women, and their terror resolved itself into wonder at his calm smile as he gently urged them to watch for the "red-hot shot of the Swedes," and smother it at once whenever seen.

Obstructions were everywhere to be seen. Pieces of tile, chimney-pots, gargoyles, masonry, and splinters of timber were lying about in every direction, while fragments of glass were strewn as thickly on the streets as the husbandman sows the seed in the newly-plowed field. The smoking and blazing ruins of a large house and barn were passed, and here only did Gerold see any considerable number of people busily engaged in extinguishing the fire. He doffed his hat and smilingly acknowledged the cheer with which he was greeted. Gerold reined in his horse and said to the little knot of men and women :

"That is good. You deserve no less the thanks of our people than those who defend the city upon the ramparts. Be watchful of the red-hot shot. They endanger the city greatly and must be quenched quickly, my good neighbors."

"We shall watch and pray, Sir Gerold," answered a large woman to whom fear seemed to be a stranger.

"We shall quench them, Sir Gerold, as we did in '87," spoke an aged man whose sparkling eyes belied the evident infirmities of his person.

As Gerold approached the St. John Tower, the number of missiles increased and the shots struck with greater force. He passed quickly under the great arch, vaulted from his horse and walked with rapid strides to the room above. As he passed the open space behind the wall, the musketeers recognized him and a great shout went up :

"A Gerold ! A Gerold ! Death to the Swedes !" It rose above the din of the cannonading, above the crashing of masonry and brought Von Dougal, who had command of the gate and tower, quickly upon the scene.

Blackened with powder smoke, he smiled as he extended his hand to Gerold and said cheerily :

"Still keeping the Swedes busy. We have dismantled a number of their guns and their fire is visibly slackening. How is it at the St. Francis Gate ?"

"Heavy, Von Dougal. They intended to breach the wall and tower, but we foiled them."

He advised similar action to that taken at the north tower, if the fire became too much concentrated.

"If you are breached badly, let me know instantly, but concentrate your fire. Waste no shot on moving masses, but prevent at all hazards the dangerous concentration which resulted in shocking the St. Francis Gate and wall. There is little to fear except from their artillery. They have numerous and powerful guns.

After carefully inspecting the damage done by the steady fire, and in imminent danger of his life, Gerold remounted his horse and proceeded to the south gate. Von Dougal cast an admiring look at him as he departed and he again directed the operations with renewed activity.

Gerold passed Ebertus's Thurm and as he raised his eyes to the living-rooms above, facing the west, he saw Madame von Ebertus looking out of the window. At her side were Bertha and Anna. Again the black hat with the red plumes was doffed and again the calm, serene smile played about the mouth of Sir Gerold. The stern lines of his face had

relaxed and the smile gave way to a tender, loving expression as he looked upon the three women huddled together in that upper window gazing furtively after him.

A sharp gallop brought him to the eastern tower, which had suffered almost as heavily as the St. Francis Tower.

Carolus was in command here and he, too, like Von Dougal, was begrimed with the smoke of the guns. His eyes were bloodshot, but the daring soldier was also cheerful and alert. His command had suffered less than either the north or south tower detachments and the constant explosions testified to the precision with which the guns were served.

The situation was quickly explained, the necessary instructions given and again Gerold mounted his horse to return to headquarters. The western tower was subjected to a slight attack only and the guns were apparently drawn away from this point of attack to replace those which were disabled at the earthworks above the bridge. Thus the day wore on with unceasing attack and defence, until sunset, when a shell from the mortars, which had created great havoc in the large battery at the stone bridge, exploded in the very centre of the powder train of the enemy. A terrific upheaval followed. Earthworks, shot, shell, caissons, guns, wagons, horses and men were hurled in all directions with terrible force. The concussion was felt with distinctness on the city's walls, and a great cheer went up from the defenders as the results were noted.

The battery was immediately silenced and in a short quarter of an hour, the bombardment of the city ceased entirely at all points.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

AN OFFER OF AID.

GEROLD called a council at Ebertus's Thurm during the early hours of night and every prominent officer was present. The situation was briefly discussed, and after considerable conference, it was decided to send two separate but small parties to ascertain, if possible, the meaning of the sudden cessation of hostilities. While Gerold and his officers were discussing the best means of obtaining the information needed, a subordinate officer with several soldiers asked admission. Upon being admitted, the subaltern briefly stated that a messenger from Breisach was without and demanded immediate admittance.

"Let him enter," answered Gerold.

A tall, well formed man of unmistakable military bearing entered the room and walked to the table where Gerold sat. He saluted, and reaching into his doublet produced a small, sealed package, addressed to the commandant of Villingen. Before handing it to Gerold, he said in German, but with a distinctly foreign accent :

"Sir Commandant, I am Captain Munro, under orders of Colonel Ascanio, who with four hundred and fifty Italians retreated through the Höllenthal. We escaped from Freiburg when that place was invested and finally taken by Marshal Horn. I volunteered to bring this despatch through the lines of the allies and deliver it to you. It has taken me two days to do it. I am at your service, Sir."

He handed the package to Sir Gerold and stepped back.

Gerold took the letter, looked at the address and broke the seal. He read as follows :

" TO THE COMMANDANT OF VILLINGEN,

" Greeting :

" After the disasters which befell our arms in the Rhine Valley, I, and the remnant of my command, numbering four hundred and fifty men and officers, with four light field-pieces, escaped from Freiburg by a stratagem. At the entrance of the Höllenthal, I made a junction, or rather communicated, with Colonel Aescher who had also escaped capture with about two hundred and fifty men. We are encamped in the Stockwald, having followed the track of the main body of Swedes and their allies. The investment of Villingen by such superior forces prevents our joining you. Pleikart von Helmstatt with three thousand Suabians is moving west to Villingen to demand surrender. General Aldringer with nine regiments of Bohemians is coming up from the south towards Villingen to assist in checking the advance of the allies on their march to capture Constance. Helmstatt will, however, only pass on his way to Singen to meet Horn and will in all probability simply make a demonstration. With a capable guide, I will endeavor to join you in Villingen in company with Aescher and his command as soon as you can devise a plan. I am unable to cope with the overwhelming forces about me and can act only on your suggestions. Let the plan be simple and effective and if successful, it will bring to your relief upwards of seven hundred men. You may depend absolutely upon Captain Munro who has my fullest confidence.

" Yours in the faith,

" COLONEL ALEXANDER ASCANTIO."

Gerold looked a moment at the young officer and then turned to the assembled officers :

" Captain Munro brings us welcome news and assistance,

if such a thing can be brought about. Sir Carolus, read the message."

Carolus took the letter and read it to the eagerly listening throng. Cheers rang out in the room as Carolus concluded and every officer grasped the young foreigner's hand.

Gerold again turned to the young man and asked :

"When did you leave your command? "

"Two days ago. I had to remain in the enemy's camp nearly all day. Had it not been for the heavy work of bombardment and the confusion resulting from your excellent gunnery, I would surely have been detected. As it was I easily escaped through their lines when night fell."

"What was the meaning of the sudden ending of the bombardment? " interjected Carolus.

"To bring all the guns from the south and west to the batteries at the bridge, where most of the guns were disabled, but principally because their ammunition gave out. A shell from the city destroyed their entire supply of powder and did terrible destruction to their train. Over two hundred men were killed and wounded including Von Gultlingen, who was hurt about the head by the flying missiles," answered the officer.

"Then they will resume on the morrow? " asked Gerold carelessly.

"Yes, provided the new ammunition and their trains arrive."

Gerold turned to his officers and said :

"It is evident that the reinforcements must reach the city and be safely harbored before the additional divisions of Suabians cut off all communication in the west and south. Captain Munro must leave to-night with a trusty guide and take a letter to Colonel Ascanio. Late to-morrow night, a sortie must be made to divert the enemy on the north and east and the friendly troops will thus, quietly if possible, forcibly if they must, pass through the lines and enter by the west gate."

"Carolus, take the quill and write as follows" :

"TO COLONEL ALEXANDER ASCANIO :

"Greeting :

"Captain Munro has carried out your orders and handed me your welcome letter. At two A.M. to-morrow night, a sortie in force will be made to the north and east to divert the enemy. When all is in readiness, a red and blue light will be seen in the topmost window of the St. Francis Tower, which is the northern tower of the fortress. Advance quickly to the west gate which will be thrown open to you on receipt of the countersign. A white light, also in the top window of the St. Wendel Tower, will direct you to the proper gate. My officer who accompanies Captain Munro will give you the countersign. If absolutely necessary, leave some of your horses, but bring the field-pieces with you. Do not delay when the signals burn, but make every effort to enter the city.

"Yours in the faith,

"SIR GEROLD VON EBERTUS,

"Governor."

When Carolus had finished the letter, Gerold turned to his officers with a smile and said :

"Who will volunteer to accompany Captain Munro?"

"I! I!" A chorus of voices rang out in the room as each one present eagerly offered his services. Gerold smiled and turning to Carolus continued :

"Sir Carolus, I prefer to let Robertus be the guide. He is young and active and experienced. He knows the ground better than most of us. At any rate, he can be most easily spared."

Robertus stepped forward and saluting, said :

"I am prepared to go now. I thank you for the honor and I will do my best to conduct our friends within the city's walls."

Robertus received the countersign and in a few minutes

departed with Captain Munro amid the hearty good-wishes of the assembled officers. The conference broke up soon after, and the watches at the gates and on the walls were doubled for the night.

A few hours later, two men left the fortress by the St. Wendel Gate and disappeared in the darkness towards the west. After carefully picking their way and advancing with the utmost caution, they succeeded in passing the enemy's advance lines. Numerous camp-fires, screened so that the glare should not be seen from the city's walls, were visible, and the two officers after much manœuvring and considerable risk, finally cleared the entire cordon which encircled the beleaguered city. Onward they pressed, hour after hour, observing due caution, and as the night wore on to the approaching dawn, they reached the Höllenthal.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

A SORTIE AND REINFORCEMENTS.

MANY alarms were sounded throughout the night and two attempts to blow up the outer gates were frustrated. The second attempt was made upon the St. John Gate at midnight by two men who fashioned a raft and flat boat and loaded upon the former a barrel of powder. They succeeded in launching the boat, fastening the raft to the great iron rings immediately under the drawbridge and setting fire to the fuse before they were discovered.

The guards above, attracted by the sputtering fuse, promptly rolled several large stones over the parapet and shattered both the boat and raft to fragments. The adventurous men lost their lives in the attempt.

Shortly after, the eastern and northern heavens were brilliantly illuminated by several conflagrations. Plundering and burning had commenced. The hapless villages of Riedheim, Marbach, Kirchdorf and Klingen were wiped out, and the peasants who valiantly defended their homes against the heartless bands of marauders, were put to the sword. Upwards of one hundred men and women were massacred and many wounded and maltreated, or cast out in the cold after having been stripped even of their clothes, escaping only to die of exposure. The looting, burning and murdering continued, and the red glow of one burning village no sooner died down than the light from the next one flared up on the distant horizon.

The day broke and in the gray light of morning the soldiers again manned the guns, which boomed out from their different quarters on the city's walls, but scarcely a shot was returned from the besiegers' lines.

The fresh supply of ammunition evidently had not reached the enemy's lines. The fire was so intense and constant that the soldiers who were encamped behind the earthworks were obliged to retire. The guns on the walls were finally stopped and the entire garrison was ordered to repair the damages caused by the furious bombardment of the day before.

Willing hands were bent to the task, and every able-bodied inhabitant was pressed into service. Even women assisted in hauling material to the outer works and in carrying stones of sufficient weight to throw from the walls, should the city be stormed. Many houses were pulled down for this purpose, and late in the afternoon scarcely a stone large enough to be hurled was left in the ruins of houses destroyed by fire in the city. Great pyramids were gathered and placed in convenient piles on the walls, the work of women and children and non-combatants. The spirit of war was inborn in the populace and it was prepared to shed its last drop of blood in defence of the city.

Gerold superintended the work of the soldiers personally, and inspired in them the enthusiasm which burned like a bright flame in his heart. The blood of the lion was up and there was no relenting. The soldier was at his best and his iron will knew no yielding. The scholar vanished, and the gentle, serene nature gave way to the restless, active, and uncompromising man of blood and iron.

The necessary repairs were completed during the afternoon and the weary men were ordered to rest and prepare for the work of the night. There was much misgiving and doubt as to the enemy's intentions, it being an inexplicable riddle to the soldiers why the attack had not been resumed. As the day wore on and the great work of repairs was nearing the end, the surprise and speculation at the inactivity of the

enemy increased. Not only did they not reoccupy their trenches and camps, but were posted behind the little hillocks and depressions of the Schwenningen valley, and as the day was drawing to a close, large masses were seen moving southeasterly to the valley of the Brigach, well out of range of even the largest guns in the fortress.

Hour after hour passed and the shades of evening deepened into night. It was cold and clear. The challenges and answers by the sentries on the walls rang out sharp and distinct in the frosty night. Every fifty feet of wall was patrolled by a sentry in addition to the regular watches at the gates, towers and bartizans. Signal lights flashed regularly from the four principal gates and were answered with equal regularity.

Thus the night wore on to midnight, when Gerold again called his officers in consultation at headquarters. The plan of the sortie was carefully considered, and every officer was instructed with special care and minuteness. Lumbas had charge of the St. Wendel Gate which was to be thrown open for Colonels Ascanio and Aescher. A large force of pikemen, musketeers and artillerymen were to protect the gate. Rheinhold had charge of the signals while Carolus and Von Dougal with all the cavalry were to make the sortie in two separate parties. Every soldier in the fortress, capable of bearing arms was under orders at one o'clock ; the entire forces of Villingen, nearly fifteen hundred men were posted.

The great drawbridge of the Franciscan Gate was lowered and the two bodies of cavalry silently moved out to the subordinate tower. A quarter of an hour later, the second drawbridge, greased and oiled at its bearings, noiselessly slid into the recessed masonry at the further side of the moat.

At a signal from the tower, the gate was opened and a dozen scouts passed out into the night and disappeared to the north and east. Carolus with Gurdin followed with two hundred and fifty cuirassiers and lancers, and moved in an easterly direction. Von Dougal and Danni, who had re-

covered from the wounds received in the *mêlée* with Von Gultlingen, with two hundred lighter cavalry and a detachment of lancers moved northerly. Both divisions almost immediately lost sight of each other.

Carolus, at the head of the column, trotted briskly on the Schwenningen road. After passing across the crown of the hillock, the glow of camp-fires was distinctly seen. The broad, white road was discernible in the starlight. When half the intervening space between the hill and the camp had been traversed, Carolus called his subaltern officers and gave his final instructions.

Forward they again moved and from the trot they broke into a canter and then into a furious gallop, as they reached the drowsy sentinels on the edge of the enemy's lines. The alarm was sounded, but too late. Carolus broke through the camp like a whirlwind, cutting down the helpless and frightened bands of scurrying and bewildered mercenaries. With ringing cheers the heavy cavalymen under Gurdin shouted their terrific yells "A Carolus! A Carolus!" as they hewed, cut, and hacked right and left through the sleeping camp. In the midst of the slaughter, a bugle note was heard, and back the lancers and cuirassiers whirled with precision to the outer edge of the camp to fall on new lines of surprised masses of the enemy. Carolus thus worked from camp to camp, striking and retreating, and before the bewildered besiegers knew the cause of all the commotion, the Villingen riders had struck and disappeared. For ten or fifteen minutes the furious onslaught was continued until in the semi-darkness another body of cavalry was seen.

A bugle sounded, and another, and then in unison. Carolus and Von Dougal had joined as prearranged. Once more the whole cavalry charged through the centre of the camp, which contained many tents and where, presumably, the principal officers were quartered. With deafening yells the whole mass broke into the lines of the scurrying besiegers. Scarcely any opposition was encountered and the feeble resistance

seemed to inspire greater daring among the charging troopers.

Again the bugle note sounded, clear and distinct above the rushing sounds of hoof-beats on the frozen ground and the clang, rattle, and cries of the attacking soldiers. Again the whole body moved out of the mazes of tents, equipage, guns, and wagons into the fields, and finally upon the Schwenningen road. Again the crown of the hillock was reached and with a quick glance in the direction of Villingen, Carolus and Von Dougal saw the red and blue light burning in the tower of St. Francis and the white light in the St. Wendel Tower.

Carolus turned to Von Dougal and, after slackening his pace, said :

"The time is up, we cannot remain longer outside. The whole horde is up and arming. Remain here until I return."

He gave a quick command and again his riders separated from the main body. Gurdin was ordered to the right while he took the left and described a half circle to convince himself of the situation. He returned to Von Dougal and said, quickly :

"All's well. Forward, now !"

The whole body moved forward until within a few hundred yards of the walls. Here they again separated, Carolus galloping to the right and Von Dougal to the left, to the St. Wendel Gate. The red and blue light was burning brightly in the tower as Carolus passed rapidly by the outer gate and onward to the other side of the fortress.

Without any preliminary indication a volley of musketry burst upon the silent night. The flash of the guns could be distinctly seen a thousand yards or so to the west. Instantly Carolus called upon his riders :

"Forward, now ! Forward, my men to your friends !"

A terrific yell greeted his appeal and with bodies bent down to the pommels of their saddles, Carolus and his riders

flew over the ground. The rattling sabres, jingling spurs and the deep breathing of the horses to the accompaniment of pounding hoofs, were the only sounds heard as the cuirassiers and lancers sped onward to the eastern approach of the city. The volleys of musketry and the sounds of conflict were growing louder each moment and more distinct. The situation was not clear to Carolus but with his usual reckless bravery, he forged ahead into the unknown dangers which confronted him.

Onward into the depression which lay to the west of Villingen, Carolus and his men galloped madly. Each moment the rattle of musketry and the muffled, hoarse shouts of the men in deadly encounter rose above the sounds of the charging column. A sharp blast of a bugle was again heard to the south. It was promptly answered by the trumpeter at Carolus's side. Von Dougal had doubled the city's walls and met the main column again west of the St. Wendel Gate. In a few seconds, they joined their forces.

Carolus rode up to Von Dougal, and asked quickly :

"Did you meet any of the enemy?"

"No, but I heard the musketry and decided that either the friendly troops had reached the trenches or that you had run across a detachment," answered Von Dougal.

"It is Ascanio and Aescher then. Forward! Remember the war cry, my men! Charge!"

Again the whole body swept onward directly away from the walls of the city and up the slight rise upon which the besiegers were encamped. The camp-fires of the Swedes and their allies burned up in yellow, shooting flames and aided considerably in lighting up the surrounding objects. Carolus ordered Von Dougal to separate and take the left while he described a slight angle as they reached the masses of struggling men and horses.

"God with us! Strike!" shouted Carolus above the din, and in another instant the line of besiegers was cut in two. The thunderous blows of the heavy cuirassiers came down

on the neckplates, helmets, and armor of the enemy as they bore through the thin line.

"A Gerold! A Gerold! God with us!" Onward they pressed through camp and trench to the outer edge of the lines where the masses were struggling in hand-to-hand combat. Brands of burning logs were tossed in upon the tents, wagons, and trains of the enemy and a brilliant glare lighted up the surrounding plain. A great cry rose again from the confusion and it was quickly answered.

"Ferdinand! Ferdinand! Long live the King! Down with the Swedes! Down with the heretic dogs! Strike!"

The lighter colored uniforms of the allies were easily discerned in the flaring light. They were now attacked from three different quarters. The friendly troops from the west, Carolus from the rear, and Von Dougal from the side, were striking furiously on the solid line of men. They gave way step by step and fought with desperation as they retreated. They were clearly overmatched and in a few minutes, great gaps were made in their lines.

A tall soldier suddenly bounded out of the group of horsemen, and approached Carolus, who halted an instant to get a clearer view of the field. The camp-fires and burning tents and wagons flared and shed a strong light on surrounding objects. Carolus grasped his sabre and ordered the horsemen to halt.

"Who are you?"

"Ascanio, Imperialist!"

"Ha! I thought so, and your men?" asked Carolus.

"There," he answered, pointing to the riders who were charging on the side opposite Carolus's men.

"And the guns?"

"Passed the lines, and must be near the city now!"

"Good! Sound the retreat and fall back to the gate."

Ascanio spurred his horse, and a moment later the retreat sounded. Quickly Carolus instructed Ascanio and Aescher to move to the city, and to sound the signal when about to enter.

Carolus and his men, together with Von Dougal, fell in behind the moving mass of infantry and cavalry, and covered the retreat. Several times they returned to the charge, when the infuriated Swedes pressed closely to them to prevent the entrance of the friendly troops into the city.

Larger and larger grew the numbers of the besiegers, as they gathered from all sides to the scene of conflict. Hundreds of torches were lighted, and the camp-fires were piled high with faggots to increase the light. The entire body of Imperialists, however, were between the besiegers and the city's walls, and were quickly lessening the distance to the St. Wendel Tower and Gate. Already the infantry and guns were safely over the drawbridge, and the mounted troops were moving in a solid mass against the advancing besiegers. A few hundred yards more, and the entire sortie and junction would be an accomplished success.

As the entire body of horsemen now faced the advancing line for the last time, a great cry arose above the confusion, and a large body of Swedish cavalry stormed the two sides and front of the Imperialists. The impact was fearful, and the confusion and noise were deafening. The lines were well guarded, however, and the lancers received the terrific onslaught and stayed it. A great heap of horses and men lay writhing and struggling on the two flanks of the retreating troopers. Again the charge was sounded, and the Villingener riders broke out from the solid mass into which they had closed like a fan-shaped figure. Like a thunderbolt they struck the bow-shaped lines in front of them, and passed through the lines once more. Back at them they stormed and hewed, cut and hacked with terrible execution.

All the lines gave way, and broke up in confusion. Then Carolus sounded the final retreat, and, with a precision born of careful training, the fan-shaped mass again converged to its centre, into the living knot of horsemen, leaving a clear space of several hundred yards between them and the lines of the besiegers. Then a loud blast was heard from the

walls, and the mass galloped towards the gate and draw-bridge.

As they drew beneath the shadows of the wall, a great flash of light, like the burst of a volcano, broke upon the night, and an explosion rang above their heads, terrifying and awful. The guns gathered about the gate belched forth destruction and death to the besiegers at close range, and created fearful havoc in their densely drawn lines. Volley after volley of musketry rang from the walls in addition, and levelled whole ranks of the Swedes and Suabians. In utter confusion, stunned, shattered, and broken, the enemy fled in a panic. Great heaps of men and horses dotted the plain, between the outer moat and the distant camp-fires and burning equipage, and cast long and wavering shadows in the red light that illuminated the battle-field.

The work was done, the sortie was successful, and the forces were safely in the sheltering walls of Villingen. A number of wounded troopers were brought into the city, but the dead were left in piles, where they had fallen in the brief but fierce hand-to-hand encounter on the western slopes of Villingen. Nearly six hundred dead and wounded allies were left in the camps and in the open fields around the walls of the city. The daring attack upon them, the heavy loss of the night in addition to the tremendous losses sustained in the two days of the bombardment, disheartened the besiegers, and caused great grumbling and opposition to the continuance of the deadly work.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

DESTRUCTION OF THE WARENBURG.

SUNDAY, the following day, opened with a brilliant winter sun and clear sky. It was one of those wonderful days never seen except in the highlands. So clear was the rarefied air, that distances generally obscured by a misty atmospheric veil, seemed almost at hand. The minutest details of plain, hill, forest, and mountain could be seen with perfect ease, from the walls of the city.

Far to the south, the glistening peaks of the Alps rose in their white contour against the deep blue sky beyond, while the foot-hills loomed in dark masses against the scintillating slopes of eternal snow. To the west and north, the pine-forest, more sharply contrasted with the brilliant ether, stood out like enormous rows of soldiers with pikes at rest. The undulations of the north and east revealed the rolling country nearly to the Baar and the Neckar.

The western plain was dotted with the bodies of the fallen soldiers. Horses, men, arms, and accoutrements were everywhere to be seen, while beyond them, the glistening arms, helmets, shoulder-pieces, and cuirasses of moving men could be distinctly observed in the besiegers' lines.

Gerold, Bertha, and Egon stood on the lofty rampart, looking upon the panorama spread below them.

Carolus, Von Dougal, Ascanio, and Aescher were standing on the opposite side of the St. Francis Tower. With them was Anna.

Gerold looked intently at every object, and when he had completed the sweep, he turned to Egon.

"See, my boy," he said, as he pointed to a moving mass of soldiers on the edge of the horizon towards Kappel, "there come more of our countrymen to assist the Swedes in shedding our blood. That is, undoubtedly, Pleikart von Helmstatt with his Suabians from Rothweil. They will soon be in the enemy's camp."

They stood looking at the slowly moving troops. Soon a body of cavalry was seen to leave the lines and move swiftly in the direction of the advancing column.

Egon looked with curious and wondering eyes, first at his father and then at the moving masses in the distance. He turned to Gerold after a few moments of silence and asked :

"Why do Germans war on Germans and in doing so make friends with all the different foreigners in Germany, to help them kill off their own countrymen?"

Gerold looked at his son, laid his hand tenderly upon his shoulder, and said with a sad smile :

"For the purpose of preventing a large portion of them from worshipping God according to the ritual and forms which have been observed for over a thousand years in Germany. This, my son, is the charge which our enemies make against us as well, except that their beliefs and manner of worshipping have been observed only ten decades, while ours are as many centuries old."

"Why do not the Germans settle it themselves, then? Why are all the fierce foreigners here to help them?" asked the boy, not satisfied with the explanation.

"Ah, there is the trouble. In this unfortunate country, patriotism is dead. The German has no country when the ritual is attacked. The love for the Fatherland is buried under the vastly greater and more important work of worshipping the Creator by rood and rote. He honors God by murdering his neighbor, and if he is not powerful enough, he summons to his aid the mercenaries from the four corners of

Europe. This is called 'Worshipping God by force.' 'Peace and Good Will,' the teaching of our Saviour, is a dead issue, and war and hatred form the living creed which transcends all in the minds of men sixteen centuries after the Crucifixion."

Bertha, who was listening to the conversation between father and son, turned to Gerold and said :

"Explain to Egon in plainer language rather than by figures of speech. Tell him the intention of the great Reformer and his object in separating from the ancient Church, so that the boy may better understand the circumstances which have brought all this misery and wretchedness upon our unhappy land."

"Ah, Bertha, that would be a long task and one which cannot be done now, but I will do so at the first opportunity," replied Gerold.

Egon was still dissatisfied and again asked :

"Why do you fight on either side of such a war, when you believe both sides are to blame, father?" A sharp inquisitive look came into his eyes as he looked into Gerold's face.

"I fight as I have done all my life, out of patriotism for my country and loyalty to my Emperor and the ancient House of Austria. I stand as the representative of that House in this fortress and shall defend it to the last. We are not the aggressors and we stand on the ground where we have stood for upwards of three hundred years, where your forefathers and mine have lived for fifteen generations in honor and respect. Here we shall continue to stand. For each man's honest belief, I have nothing but respect. I shall be the last to reproach him with that which may lift his soul to God and help to elevate him amongst his fellows, but I shall resist a forcible attempt to impose beliefs upon me which my education and the traditions of my house gainsay. I am a soldier, and loyalty to my superiors is with me the first principle. The King demands the loyal resistance of this

city to its enemies and I shall execute that demand, whether Swedes, Suabians, Frenchmen, or even my own troops oppose the carrying out of my commands. This, my son, is the position I take and that is the ground I shall stand upon, while there is a drop of blood in my veins."

Egon looked admiringly at his father as he explained his position, and while the religious principles at stake were lost upon him, the appeal to patriotism and the common ground of loyalty to the King were inherently understood by him.

Bertha ventured no further remarks, but looked with shining eyes at Gerold as he thus delivered himself. To her the scene was impressive. She turned her eyes away from Gerold and his son and looked sadly on the evidences of death and destruction beneath them. A great weight was on her heart and the conviction was forced upon her, that if there were many men in Germany who placed patriotism and love of country above the hollow mockery of religious forms of worship, they would be spared such scenes as they were passing through, and death and destruction, murder and rapine in the name of religion would be impossible.

She leaned abstractedly upon the parapet and gazed with moist eyes at the scenes below her. Softly, Gerold walked to her side and looked at her fine face as she locked and unlocked her fingers.

"What are you thinking of, Bertha?" he asked as he stood close by her side.

She looked at him with her great, violet eyes, but said nothing. Gerold noted the expression of deep feeling and gently took her hands in his.

"I know, Bertha! The dreadful scenes have touched your sympathetic heart and filled it with sorrow. God grant that the day will come when these fearful excesses will no longer be possible, and the spirit of 'Good Will to Men' will be no longer a catch-word and empty mouthing. But do not give way. Be brave and face the sorrowful scenes with a sturdy heart, as befits the bride of a soldier, and the

daughter of a house of warriors. See, Bertha, we must not let our tender feelings gain the upper hand when the vultures hover about." He pointed to the junction which the reinforcements had now made with the body of cavalry. Gerold then moved to the opposite side of the tower and discussed the probable result of the new addition to the army of the besiegers with Carolus and Colonels Ascanio and Aescher.

Bertha and Egon remained on the rampart and talked. Von Dougal and Anna had descended to the wall below. The bells of the Minster pealed out upon the morning air and called the faithful to worship and thanksgiving for the timely arrival of help. Slowly Gerold and the officers descended to the wall and then the whole group, including Von Dougal, Anna, Egon, and Bertha, wended their way to the house of God.

There was constant shifting about of forces, and great activity was manifested in the lines of the besiegers during the day, but no overt acts were done. Under cover of the undulations the large siege-guns which arrived were placed near the trenches.

Late in the afternoon, a small knot of mounted men was seen approaching the fortress under the protection of a white flag, and again the summons to surrender was delivered to the commandant.

This time it was from Pleikart von Helmstatt, who made his headquarters at the stone bridge with Rau and Von Gultlingen.

An answer similar to that formerly sent to Duke Julius of Würtemberg and to Marshal Horn was given to this summons and the little knot of horsemen departed to the lines. Shortly after, the little eminence behind the old castle of Warenburg to the north and west of the city was transformed into a strong intrenchment and a number of the heaviest guns were mounted there. Hubenloch and Bickenberg, two other slight rises, were similarly mounted and the

preparations for a continuance of the bombardment were conducted with great vigor. Running trenches, connecting the main batteries, were dug with wonderful rapidity, and as the evening drew near, the formidable forces around the walls of the fortress were well sheltered behind the new earthworks.

As the result of another council, it was decided to make a sortie to the Warenburg and destroy, if possible, the formidable batteries posted at the old castle.

In the dead of night, Carolus and a picked force of riders and musketeers stole away from the outer gates. The musketeers were posted to protect the retreat while the riders slowly advanced until within three or four hundred yards of the enemy's lines. Carolus, Gurdin, and Robertus drew away from their companions with a dozen picked men on foot, and gradually stole upon the trenches. The castle loomed up dark and sombre in the starlight, while fantastic lights flickered upon its black and decaying walls from the camp-fires around it everywhere. Silently, Carolus and his party crawled to the edges of the newly dug trenches and quietly they moved among the black-mouthed guns which thrust their long muzzles out through the apertures.

There was a fumbling for a few seconds and then the sharp clicks of nearly a dozen hammers were heard as the spikes were driven home in the vents of the guns.

The daring men quickly dropped down the roughly shelving trenches and in a few moments were again in the saddle. With breathless interest they waited for a sign or signal of discovery, but it came not.

One, two, five minutes passed in intense watching, but the heavy labors of the day had reduced the besiegers to a state of exhaustion in which watchfulness was impossible. Sentry, private, and officers alike were in a deep slumber from which the clicks of the hammer awoke a few, but beyond a perfunctory look through the apertures and a yawn or two, no notice was taken of the daring attempt upon their guns.

Carolus, Gurdin, and Robertus consulted a few minutes together and then the latter rode quickly to the musketeers. In a short space of time, they were brought up and quietly posted within a few dozen yards of the new trenches. At a signal, a quick forward movement was made and the entire body of troopers went over the breastwork and into the midst of the sleeping enemy. Huge bunches of faggots were seized by a few dozen of them and quickly thrown into the great hall of the castle at the entrance. Sabre in hand, the dismounted troopers struck and slashed the sleeping Suabians who were posted at this battery. A great cry rose up and there was hurrying and arming among the thousand or twelve hundred men who were encamped.

Resolutely placing his back to the now fiercely burning castle, Carolus and his men formed a line to and across the trenches and faced the gathering forces who were forming for attack. When the moment arrived for delivering the final blow, Carolus gave the signal to the musketeers and a hundred shots crashed into the dense lines of gathering men from the top of the trenches. Hidden in the cloud of smoke which obscured everything within fifty paces, Carolus and his troopers leaped across the trenches and away from the newly built slopes of stone and earth. Away they rushed, followed by the musketeers, and in a few minutes were again in the saddle covering the retreat of the foot folk.

The increasing glare of the burning castle shed a bright light across the fields as Carolus slowly retreated behind the musketeers. A few dozen of Suabian riders started out from behind the works and sped after the bunch of troopers under the command of Gurdin. The challenge was quickly accepted and with drawn sabre, Gurdin, at the head of nearly one half of the troopers who had taken part in the sortie, sprang at the approaching riders of Von Helmstatt. The thunder of nearly one hundred horses' hoofs sounded hard and metallic on the frozen ground. A sharp crash, then the incessant rattle of sabre and the shouts of men broke forth

upon the night. The flames of the burning castle mounted higher and higher and the glare lit up the fields with a bright light which was reflected upon the towers, spires, and windows of the distant fortress.

Madly the riders careered, whirled, struck and hacked at each other, and again the iron-armored cuirassiers under Gurdin delivered their thunderous blows on the adventurous Suabians, who writhed, like wheat under the flail. To pass through them and return upon them from the rear was the work of only a few seconds. The terrific yells as they again drove through them struck terror into a portion of the enemy's riders, and after a few weak efforts they fled precipitately to their trenches. A bugle sound from Carolus brought the cuirassiers back to the retreating column. Five wounded and one dead cuirassier were taken with them, while a number of riderless horses were gathered in.

Ten minutes afterwards the whole party was again over the drawbridge, and the cheers with which they were greeted could be distinctly heard in the camps of the besiegers. Shortly afterwards a furious cannonading was directed on the burning castle from the walls. These, together with the new trenches around them, were levelled, and the guns, carriages, and equipments were reduced to a wreck from which little could be saved. As the walls fell, the fire died out, the bombardment from the fortress ceased, and again the city was enveloped in silence.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

THE STORMING OF THE CITY.

PROMPTLY at earliest dawn, the bombardment from the Hubenloch and Bickenberg was opened on the St. John and St. George towers and gates and they were subjected to a furious hail of shot and shell. It was evident that the attempt to make a breach at the St. Francis entrance was temporarily abandoned and the efforts were transferred to the other two gates of the city.

Carolus and Von Dougal, in charge of these two gates and towers, kept up an animated and constant fire on the besiegers' lines, until it was almost impossible to work the guns longer. Again the order was given to separate the pieces and distribute them a few hundred yards on either side of the walls. The cessation of fire from the walls during this manœuvre heightened the fire of the enemy and every gun was worked to its utmost.

Never, in the history of the city, had such a terrible rain of missiles been directed upon any fortification as was now hurled at the St. George Tower. Huge pieces of masonry, enormous tiles, and, finally, the flagstaff, from which floated the colors of Villingen, were knocked over and reduced to ruins. Great openings were torn in the walls of the tower and the solid fortification was slowly crumbling into a ruin. A number of great shells flew into the jagged openings and the terrific explosions bulged the solid floorings outward. With a detonation the huge tower broke apart and fell to the

walls a ruin. The great masses of stone entirely choked up the entrance to the outer gate and rendered either exit or entrance by the east gate impossible. As the great stones slid, tumbled, and fell, they dammed the moat to a considerable extent.

Gerold, who was present when the tower fell, immediately gave orders to reinforce the outer wall. A number of lighter guns were withdrawn from the St. Wendel Tower and wall and were placed in position at the outer gate and wall. Several companies of musketeers were also ordered to this point. While this was occurring, Carolus had placed the guns in position on the wall and, assisted by Lumbas and his artillerymen from the St. Francis Tower, again poured a rain of shot and shell into the trenches of the besiegers.

The destruction of the tower brought a number of additional guns to the batteries at the Hubenloch, and in an hour the fire had increased terribly. Systematically and persistently, pace after pace of the walls was reduced, and before noon one hundred paces on either side of the tower lay in a confused and shelving mass, filling up the great moat and causing the current of the water to seek new outlets. A lake of water, reaching almost to the outer works, was thus formed, and while it added to the safety of the besieged in forming a barrier against assault, it also added to the dangers to which the outer works were subjected, by isolating them from the city and making a detour necessary to reach the outer gates in event of the storming of the city.

Every available gun was placed upon the walls near the ruins of the St. George Tower; the thunderous explosions were deafening and the huge banks of powder smoke became so thick that it was only with difficulty that the men who served the guns could breathe. What little wind was stirring blew the dense clouds back towards the city and into the faces of the soldiers on the walls.

Towards noon the enemy again poured a hail of red-hot solid shot into the city, and in an hour a number of small

fires broke out in spite of the tremendous efforts of the inhabitants to quench these dangerous missiles. Five hours had now elapsed since the beginning of the bombardment and the fate of the city was hanging in the balance.

The whole force of the besiegers was now directed against the ruined St. George Tower and the efforts of the enemy against the St. John and St. Wendel towers had ceased entirely. Nearly two hundred guns were spouting death and destruction at each other within a few hundred yards. The fires in the city burned slowly, but could not be put out. One house after another was reduced to ashes and it was only by extraordinary exertions in a number of cases that a spread of the conflagration was prevented. No sooner was one spot burned out and the danger averted, than it began anew elsewhere.

The tireless efforts of the inhabitants and the solid construction of the houses alone prevented the utter destruction of the devoted city. When the excitement was at its height, the Ursuline Convent was ignited by a red-hot shot and in half an hour the large building was a roaring furnace of flame. The grounds which separated it from the Minster prevented any serious damage to the beautiful pile of architecture, but with its destruction, the spirits of the inhabitants, worn out by incessant work, anxiety, and fear, perceptibly weakened, and a feeling of deep despair seemed to take possession of them, and without the inspiring presence of someone in whom they had confidence, their energies flagged and they fell into the deepest slough of despond.

Gerold, Ascanio, Rheinhold, and Aescher rode through the city when this state of affairs was brought to their notice, and by word and act did their utmost to restore the drooping spirits of the townspeople. They succeeded in a measure and then rode quickly to the north tower. After mounting it, they took a careful observation of the surroundings and from the lofty elevation they saw the heavy massing of troops at the Hubenloch. Pointing to it, Ascanio said :

"See! They are gathering for the assault. They will make the attempt before night falls."

"I expected it from the manner in which they concentrated their fire. Ascanio, we must protect the outer wall at all hazards and unless it is breached, they can never storm it. That body of water protects the inner walls as effectively as an additional rampart," answered Gerold.

Great masses of men were seen moving behind the trenches and disappearing behind the protecting depressions of their lines. The fire of the enemy was now directed to the outer gates and fortifications and the defenders were obliged to retire from the storm of iron and flying missiles.

"They are at it! That is their intention! Rheinhold, signal to fall away and plant the guns away from the gate. It is wrong to expose those brave men to such a murderous fire unnecessarily."

To the south and west the moving bodies of troops could be seen, all converging to a point east of the ruined towers. Guns, carriages, wagons, and camp equipage were on the move and on three sides of the oval city the bombardment had ceased.

"There is one comfort at any rate, in this move. The red-hot shot have ceased to do their damage and the fires are dying out," said Gerold.

With redoubled energy the besiegers turned their efforts to the reduction of the outer wall and this, too, pace by pace was opened and levelled. When it was impossible to remain longer on the outer wall, Gerold ordered all the soldiers to retire, leaving a heavy detachment at the two subordinate barbicans where preparations were made to open a flank attack when the enemy should come into close range.

The bells of the city were ordered to be tolled and the inhabitants prepared for the assault. Old men, women and even children were posted on the walls to roll stones over the parapet if necessary, and at four o'clock in the afternoon all arrangements were perfected. Every gun was placed in

position, and nearly a hundred black muzzles were directed from every available point of vantage into the openings of the ragged walls. The outer wall was a heap of ruins for two or three hundred paces, and the sloping ruins of the St. George Tower extended into and across the inner moat to the bank opposite. The water was beginning to lower again having burrowed a channel towards the south and was running along with a good current into the moat, below the great obstruction.

Not a shot was fired by either besiegers or besieged and every energy was bent upon placing stones to form ramparts above the debris. Behind these, a large force of musketeers was placed. Carolus, with nearly five hundred cavalrymen, was ordered into the open space between the walls and then to divide his force with Von Dougal at both ends of the overflowed moat. It was a desperate move, but Gerold relied on the courage of these two men to keep the enemy in the cut through which they had to storm.

The enemy had commenced the forward movement and could be seen passing rapidly over the little hillocks into the depressions and again appearing in the plain to the east. Converging from a wide area into close columns of moving bodies they approached, first in huge squares as if on parade, then closing as they came within ten hundred paces of the outer walls. Hundreds of them were carrying bags, boxes and baskets filled with hay, branches, and every available material with which to fill the moat and make a passage over it.

When the solid phalanx had arrived within five hundred paces, Gerold gave the signal and all the smaller guns on the outer walls were fired simultaneously into the moving mass of men. The shock was terrible but it was only for an instant. With yells the enemy broke into a run and the assault was commenced in dead earnest. Volley after volley was poured into the ranks of the swiftly moving men, and when the advance reached within a hundred paces of the

gap in the outer wall, the musketeers poured their hail of lead into them. Whole ranks fell and with them, the bundles and sacks of hay and leaves which blocked the way of those behind, by forming a rampart. It was only for a moment however. Vaulting over the dead bodies of their comrades, the Swedes who led the assault ran with furious cries into the gap amid a perfect storm of missiles, shot, shell, and musketry.

Bags, baskets, boxes, and every conceivable thing were dumped into the moat, and in a few minutes a fairly good foothold had been effected. Pressed onward by those behind them, the Swedes pushed many a comrade to his death and his body helped to form the bridge which they were now trying so desperately to make. The yells and cries of the fighting men were deafening as they were pushed, crowded and jostled into the gap by the converging masses of men behind them. Not content with the slow motion of those in front, they broke from the fan-shaped mass and rushed with the material with which they were laden, to the moat opposite the intact portions of the outer walls, while their comrades were surging into the gaps levelled by their guns.

At a signal from the inner wall, the musketeers and light artillery drew back behind the second row of barbicans, turning their attention to the men who were endeavoring to fill the moat and to scale the lower, outer walls.

Relieved from the deadly fusilade which had been poured into them, the Swedes, with desperation, picked their way over the precarious foothold of the obstructions in the moat and were commencing to scale the debris to the subordinate tower. A single shot rang out from the top of the inner wall, and, in a second, a perfect volcano of shot and shell burst upon the struggling, moving mass of foot folk. A great cry of dismay came from the stricken soldiers and whole heaps tumbled, fell and rolled into the moat while dozens were rent, torn and shattered into a shapeless mass.

Again the pressure was renewed and the whole mass was

pushed into the gap of death. Five times the howling, maddened, and desperate men were repulsed with fearful slaughter, and they had not yet passed the outer wall. Hand-grenades, petards and stones were hurled into the masses under the outer walls, and a score of densely-laden ladders were pushed over into the moat which was partly bridged with obstructions. The assault was furious and terrific. Death seemed to have no terrors for, and destruction no visible effect upon, the advancing enemy.

Gerold stood on an exposed portion of the inner wall and noted every move and the progress of the assault. Cool, calm, and collected, he gave his orders and signals. With folded arms he stood, his fine figure sharply outlined against the sky. Arrayed in burnished armor, his steel helmet surmounted with red plumes glistened in the sunlight and drew many an admiring eye on him as he watched the movements of his enemies. He smiled grimly as the futile efforts to pass the line of death and the frightful havoc among the assaulting Swedes were noted. The black muzzles of the guns were vomiting their death-dealing missiles without interruption, and no progress was made by the huge masses who were pressing, shouting and swearing at the partial inactivity to which they were subjected in the midst of the awful storm of death and destruction.

One hundred guns and one thousand men on the outer wall were checking the assault of nearly eight thousand men. The Scotch soldiers, under Leslie, had several times tried to scale the walls, but each time they were repulsed by the Italians under Ascanio with terrible loss. Hundreds of ladders laden with clambering men were pushed over or crushed with stones from the parapet, by the city's defenders, who held their places on the walls in the face of a terrible fusilade of musketry from the Würtembergers who were posted scarcely a hundred paces across the outer moat.

The besiegers were gradually spreading and it was plain that attempts would be made at other portions of the wall.

At a signal from Gerold, Carolus and Von Dougal were ordered to fall back from the position they occupied between the walls and to take new stations, Carolus at the St. Francis outer gate, and Von Dougal at the St. John Gate ready for any emergency.

This brought five hundred more men to the defence of the outer walls. Large numbers of inhabitants, animated by the brilliant defence also passed through the two gates and took their positions behind the parapets, ready to hurl missiles on the heads of those who should try to scale the substantial portions of the walls, if they succeeded in bridging the moat.

In the midst of the fearful commotion, the rattle of arms, the booming of guns, and the death-dealing shower of shot and shell, a bugle sounded the retreat of the enemy's lines. A perfect panic ensued as the huge masses cleared the walls, and emerged into the plain. Again every gun was trained upon the thousands of scurrying, fleeing soldiers. They quickly fell into a confusion, from which neither officer nor soldier could extricate them.

Gerold noted the inexplicable order and the retreat, and immediately signalled to Carolus and Von Dougal to attack the flying horde. Quickly turning to Aescher, who stood at his side, he also ordered him and Captain Munro to the pursuit with every rider available. Aescher was ordered to Carolus, and Munro and Ascanio to join Von Dougal.

In ten minutes, the two forces of cavalry were issuing out of the two outer gateways. Gerold ordered the continuance of the terrific fire on the solid masses of retreating besiegers until the combined riders of Carolus, Von Dougal, Ascanio, and Aescher cleared the outer gates, and flew over the plain in hot pursuit of the fleeing, panic-stricken allies.

Onward galloped the two cavalry divisions after the quickly retreating allies. Carolus, with nearly four hundred riders, among whom were Robertus, Gurdin with his heavy cuirassiers, and Ascanio with his entire cavalry. Carolus closed up the rapidly lessening distance between pursuer and pur-

sued, and forming his riders into a bow, swooped down upon the solid ranks of the disheartened and bewildered enemy. The lancers formed a terrible wedge, and overthrew dozens in their impetuous and resistless onslaught.

Von Dougal and Aescher, with Munro and Frey, struck another opening in the opposite side, and delivered terrible punishment on the serried lines. No formation was possible, no orders were intelligible. Swede, Würtemberger, Scot, and Frank were jumbled up in a confused mass, and the orders of officers who tried to rally and stay the terrible flight, were lost in the wild despairing cries and fearful howls and sounds of conflict.

Like a huge flock of sheep, the dense crowds of mixed-up foot folk pressed together, to protect one another from the furious assaults on the outer edges by Carolus and Von Dougal. Musketeers, jammed, pressed and pushed hither and thither, could not use their weapons, while pikemen and dismounted troopers, and even artillery-men were thrown together in little knots.

There was no order, no discipline, no head, no tail to the whole horde of over five thousand men who were cut, slashed, hewed and stabbed by the riders surrounding them. The resistance was feeble and ineffectual, and the main portion never used their arms at all. They kept moving in a line towards their trenches, more like driven cattle than disciplined troops.

At the head of their whole body was Colonel Rau who, in desperation, tried to force his men to turn about. So furious was he, that with drawn sabre, he struck at his own men. Nothing but a slight opening resulted, however, and, in a second, he and his horse were hemmed in by the writhing, disordered mass. Von Gultlingen and Brentier were shouting commands in German and French, but they fell on deaf ears in that sea of frightened, demoralized soldiers. It was each for himself, and the panic grew from bad to worse as the repeated onslaughts of Carolus and Von Dougal thrust hun-

dreds of the closely-packed soldiers like a wave from side to side.

Cries of quarter were heard on all sides, but no attention was paid to prayers of mercy. Leslie, and a few dozen Scotchmen who rallied around him, broke through the maze and succeeded in reaching the edge just as Gurdin, at the head of about fifty cuirassiers swooped down upon the enemy. With pikes levelled at the charging troopers, they shouted :

"A Leslie ! A Leslie !" It was their last stand. They were borne down to a man, and over their fallen bodies the heavy cavalrymen again fell on the allies. The penned-in soldiers raised their arms in submission, only to be cut down, ridden over, and trampled to death. Hundreds were crushed and stamped to death by their own comrades.

Carolus, who discovered Von Gultlingen near the head of the retreating lines, gave a quick command, and his riders, obedient to the bugle call, separated, and fell into line. Like a thunderbolt, his men spurred on to the head of the line, and, describing a slight detour, fell with fearful impact on the place where the standard of Würtemberg still waved over the heads of soldiers from the four-corners of Europe.

Musket barrels, pikes, rapiers, and sabres were pointed at the storming troopers, but they did not stay the onslaught. Straight into the writhing mass, the three hundred and odd sabres hewed their way and reached Von Gultlingen, who, pale and terribly frightened, shouted despairingly to those around him to repel the onslaught, but it availed him nothing. With raised sabre, he cried to the advancing noble :

"Ha ! Carolus, you are coming !"

Carolus, possessed by a perfect fury, yelled to his men for room :

"Fall back ! Give room !"

They hewed and struck, and left a small space which enabled Carolus to approach Von Gultlingen.

"You dog !" he cried, "your time has come."

He spurred his great steed so that the blood spurted, and with a terrific bound, he nearly leaped over Von Gultlingen's horse. The great weight of his charger bore down the Würtemberger's steed to his haunches, and the parry which Von Gultlingen made, was raised enough to clear Carolus's frightful sweep. It struck the treacherous man, and nearly severed his head from his shoulders. He rolled out of his saddle, a corpse, and his body was trampled upon by dozens of feet a moment later.

Carolus nearly suffered death through his foolhardy move, and had it not been for the furious efforts of his troopers who covered him, he would have been cut to pieces. Two or three slight wounds were received by him as it was, and after another tremendous effort, he again cleared the mass into which he had edged himself. Many a saddle was empty, and the riderless horses, pricked by the pikes or rapiers, flew away from the lines, maddened with pain.

For fifteen minutes the unequal contest continued. Onward the retreating allies pushed until they approached their trenches. Then they scattered and fled over the improvised ramparts, continuing their flight far beyond. The slaughter became more general as they spread, and the riders bore down upon them singly and in groups.

A large number, however, rallied as they again found themselves within the trenches and made the first effective resistance. They opened fire with their muskets, and even attempted to work the smaller guns. Up to the trenches, Carolus and Von Dougal continued the slaughter, and then wheeled to the other portions of the besiegers' lines. Here they set fire to everything inflammable, spiked the heavier guns, and harnessed up their own exhausted horses to the lighter ones, rushing over the fields with them and into the city.

Von Dougal again took the southerly course and made the circuit, detaching men to burn and destroy, while Frey and Aescher kept the gathering cavalry at bay. Carolus entered

the north gate late in the evening, exhausted, begrimed, and weakened from loss of blood ; while Von Dougal entered the west gate after passing almost completely around the city on his destructive expedition.

Thirty-eight guns, a vast amount of ammunition and powder were brought in, and the fearfully exhausted men dropped almost in their tracks as they entered the city's gates, amid the cheers of the whole populace.

Gerold stood at the St. Francis wall, and noted Carolus as he entered. He raised his hand, and took off his helmet to him in recognition of his wonderful work. He descended, visibly affected, and approached his chief officer. Handing his helmet to Rheinhold and opening his arms, he drew the half-fainting officer to his breast, while tears of joy ran down his cheeks. Not a word was spoken,—not a word was necessary,—but these two men, breast to breast, knew the full meaning of the embrace, as their hearts beat in unison behind the steel cuirasses.

Carolus quietly departed and went to his house, where Bertha deftly unfastened his armor and dressed his wounds with sisterly care, while tears of gratitude to God coursed down her cheeks for the preservation of her dearly beloved brother in the gallant part he had played in the salvation of the fortress that day.

Von Dougal reached the city some time later, and he, like Carolus, was terribly exhausted. Gerold and his officers met him at the inner gate, and Gerold embraced him in like manner. Three thousand four hundred allies, dead and wounded, lay upon the plain, in the trenches, moats, and debris of the walls when night closed upon the scene of violence and horror, while during that day of desperate defence and extended effort, and notwithstanding the overwhelming force of their enemies, but two hundred and forty of the defenders had been killed or disabled.

CHAPTER XL.

HULDAH AND MINERVA.

MINERVA sat in the apartments of Lucretia at the prefecture at Rothweil, quietly surveying the effects of her deceased sister. A sinister smile played about her mouth as she mentally valued the property. Dresses, hats, and wraps of all descriptions lay in a confused mass on the divans, chairs, and upon the floor of the room. On a square, heavy, oak table in the centre of the room were several caskets, filled with jewels and valuables. The complete wardrobe and personal effects of Lucretia were spread about the woman. Her glance rested on one article after another, and her whole avaricious nature was depicted in her face.

She leaned back in her chair and folded her arms. An expression of triumph escaped from her lips as she mused upon the events of the past few days.

“At last, after years of manœuvring and scheming, it has all come to me! Not a portion, but all of it! Money, jewels, valuables, wardrobe, furniture,—everything, and that brat Egon out of the way, too. It is almost too good to believe. So the very hunt for the truant child was the culmination of my hopes and the cause of this effect. Ha! Who says that a life devoted to the rosary and the prayer-book is not more effective than one devoted to intemperance and excess. And to think that Huldah should have tried to outwit me and secure for herself these valuables!”

She waved her hand in a semi-circle as she uttered the words half aloud.

"Outwit me! The coarse, vile woman! Who is she that she should even pretend to have a right to the effects of my dear sister? Like the sneaking thief of the battle field, she tried to rifle my dead sister's rooms and abstract the most valuable mementoes. Not so easily done, my precious aunt. I know you too well to give you even a chance. Dear, dear! What shall I do with all this finery? I might sell it piece by piece and get full value, but I cannot take the chances of holding it so long. Yes, I must dispose of the larger part in bulk if I wish to get rid of the stuff. Let me see! This is the bridal dress, I believe."

She walked over to the magnificent garment heavily embroidered in gold and silver, and held it up for closer inspection.

"A little faded and stained in parts, but it ought to bring twenty gulden at a forced sale. Now, where is the head dress? Ah, here!"

She picked up the large, high-pointed affair, from which a long, delicately woven lace veil was suspended. Taking it nearer to the window to examine it more carefully, she added:

"To think that it is nearly eighteen years since this beautiful bridal hat was made. Oh, how well my dear sister looked in this, and how wondrously it was fashioned! She was the pride and envy of the whole city as she walked in the full bloom of youth and beauty beside that nameless wretch of Villingen! My poor sister!"

She turned it round and round on her hand. When she had completed the inspection she again laid it down.

"It ought to add ten gulden to the value of the outfit. This is, of course, no time for good prices, but such clothes are rare, and the daughter of some well-to-do burgher may take a fancy to it and pay the price."

Thus she went on from one article to another, and inventoried the entire wardrobe, jewels, and valuables.

"A thousand gulden if they are worth a groschen!"

She sat down and, like a miser, counted up the values again and again. After an hour's contemplation she began to pack the things up, replaced the jewels in their caskets, and carefully locked them in a large case with solid fastenings. When she had completed her task, she left the room and locked it also.

As she walked along the corridor which led to Von Klutus's apartments, she met Huldah.

"Good evening, my dear Aunt Huldah," she smiled, as she greeted her relative.

"Good evening, my sweet niece. Have you been dispensing charity to-day, or counting your beads? You look so sanctimonious that I am almost persuaded that you have been doing good from the proceeds of the pockets of some one else."

"You are very kind and considerate. I have been dispensing charity, Huldah, but at my own expense," rejoined Minerva, as she smiled sweetly at the malignant and drawn face of her aunt.

"You would never have the chance at my expense, my good Minerva. But enough of this. Be kind enough to give me the keys to the apartment over there."

She pointed with her misshapen fingers at the rooms just vacated and locked by Minerva.

"What for, my dear aunt?"

"That is my affair. There are some things which Lucretia promised me and I wish to get them, as I shall leave Rothweil shortly."

"Oh, what a loss to the city. We shall all miss you so much. Where do you go?"

Huldah looked at her in an amused but malignant manner as she answered:

"That is also my affair, Minerva. Please give me the keys. I will return them when I have done with them."

"Really, Huldah, I could not think of it. There is nothing in the rooms belonging to you, and I know of nothing which even by a long stretch of the imagination could be

twisted into your ownership of anything in my dear sister's apartments."

"Do you mean to say that you disregard her wishes?" snappishly asked Huldah.

"I should want better testimony than your word for it, my dear aunt," replied Minerva.

"Do you deny my right to certain articles given to me and which I chose to leave, rather than take them at the time they were presented to me?"

"I certainly do!"

"Then whose are they?"

"Mine. Everything in those rooms are mine, unless Egon returns and claims them. I am nearest of kin and shall hold everything either for myself or her son, Egon."

"You shall not," said Huldah as she took a quick step towards Minerva, "Give me those keys or I shall take them from you."

Minerva fell back a few steps as Huldah, pale and threatening, advanced to her.

"The keys, do you hear? I will have what I consider mine, if half a dozen Minervas blocked my way."

She thrust her niece into a corner and with a few dexterous jerks, took the keys forcibly from her. With a scream of fright not unmingled with the avaricious feelings of loss, Minerva sought to regain the keys of the room. When she found that she was physically no match for Huldah she broke into a violent fit of uncontrollable anger. The aunt disdainfully reassured her with a parting shot.

"Go to the confessional, Minerva. You do better with the rosary and crucifix than with physical effort and earthly desires. Roll your glassy eyes heavenward in mock piety and keep your hands off the sinful possessions of earth. *Au revoir*, my dear niece."

Huldah passed along the corridor, and when she reached the door to Lucretia's apartment she boldly unlocked it, entered and bolted the door securely after her.

She took out bundle after bundle packed by Minerva and examined everything carefully. With the trained eye of a robber, she laid aside the most valuable and compact articles of attire and dexterously packed them into convenient shape for handling. When she had concluded the task, she moved the smaller case which contained the jewels and valuables, into the center of the room and tried to pry off the lid. An expression of anger escaped from her lips as she noted the secure fastenings and her inability to open them.

She promptly walked to the door and passed through the corridor into Minerva's room. A deadly glitter shone from her eyes as she approached her niece.

"Give me the keys to the caskets in the case, and quickly too, Minerva."

"Never. You shall not have them," rejoined her niece as she rose to her feet and faced her aunt.

"You won't, eh? Well, we will see." Huldah grasped her niece by the throat and deftly threw her to the floor. Reaching quickly into the chatelaine bag, which was suspended from her waist, she took all the keys and threw them into the corner. Then with a practised hand she systematically searched her clothing for other keys. Minerva struggled and screamed and even bit her aunt, but a few heavy blows brought Minerva to the conclusion that nothing could be gained by forcible opposition to this determined bird of prey. She knew that no one could come to her rescue as Von Klutus was at Kappel, and Martha and Amalia were entirely indifferent to her and her affairs.

When Huldah finally secured a bunch of finely-wrought keys from the bosom of Minerva's dress, together with a bag of jeweled rings and trinkets, her desperation rose above her cowardly and selfish nature. The thought of the loss she was about to suffer, stirred her avaricious nature to the core. The assumed mantle of gentleness and piety dropped from her like falling water and left her whole miserable, hypocritical character exposed in all its grasping and sordid mean-

ness. Her plans to convert to her own use the property of Egon seemed about to be shattered, and the hopes and schemes which had extended over many years were dashed to pieces.

She adjusted her disarranged dress and, with a deadly glitter in her eyes, ran to a stand of weapons in the vestibule and snatched a short sword from its hanging scabbard. While Huldah was picking up the keys and sorting them, Minerva quickly walked to her, keeping the weapon well out of sight in the folds of her dress. She spoke to her aunt in a strained and suppressed voice.

"Give back those keys. They don't belong to you and you have no right to them."

A laugh full of mockery and disdain was the only answer vouchsafed by Huldah.

"Give them back, Huldah, and at once."

"Count your beads and say your prayers, but don't bother me with requests. Go and rob Werner and get more sympathy and applause from the oppressed poor. You are better fitted for it than to cope with me, my pious niece."

Huldah continued the sorting of the keys without looking up. She was kneeling on the floor and her wolfish face was intently riveted on her task.

Minerva took a couple of steps nearer and quickly raised her arm. Feverishly she grasped the sword and summoning the entire strength of her thin, wiry frame to her aid, brought the glittering blade squarely down upon her aunt's shoulder at the base of the neck.

"There, you miserable thief, take that." A terrible cry of pain rang out from the stricken woman as she turned quickly and half rose to her feet. Minerva again raised the blade and struck wildly at Huldah.

With a tremendous effort, the latter rose to her feet and dodged the second stroke, and then with the ferocity of a tigress she sprang at the maddened and desperate woman. After a brief, hard struggle, she snatched the weapon from her.



With a tremendous effort she rose to her feet and dodged the second stroke. *(Page 334.)*

“Devil incarnate! Say your prayers and quickly. Your time has come.”

Grasping the now terribly frightened and shrinking woman by the throat she turned the blade of the sword dripping with blood, and pressed it into the bosom of her niece nearly to the hilt. She withdrew the weapon and with the expiring strength of her malignant, desperate nature, struck the prostrate woman over the head with the keen blade. It penetrated the skull and as Huldah's weakening, nerveless hands felt the impact, she also sank from the effects of the terrible blow, which had been delivered by her niece.

Side by side, these two excrescences of humanity measured their forms on the blood-stained floor of the prefecture. Minerva's chest gave one or two convulsive throbs, the fingers opened and closed in a nervous twitch as if still trying to grasp the earthly belongings which they had fondled only a short hour before, and then all was still.

Huldah, faint and exhausted from loss of blood, tried to crawl to the threshold of the door and raise an alarm, but only half of the room was measured when she swooned and rolled over. For many minutes she lay there while the life-blood welled from the deep wound in her neck.

At length a servant entered, and seeing the ghastly and prostrate forms of the two women, and the blood trickling across the sanded floor, she fled through the corridors of the prefecture uttering fearful screams.

CHAPTER XLI.

CAROLUS RECAPTURES ROTHWEIL.

PLEIKART VON HELMSTATT and Colonel Rau, after tremendous efforts, succeeded in restoring partial order among the besiegers. Far into the night the reorganization continued. The full magnitude of the disastrous attempt to storm Villingen, was not apparent until the reports from the various commands had been handed in at headquarters. Great numbers of allies continued the flight and pressed onward to Kappel on the road back to Rothweil. The fierce riders of Villingen had instilled a fear into the Würtembergers, from which neither cajoling, threatening, nor the appeals to their fanatical and deep seated hatred for the Imperialists could rouse them.

Two thousand men, infantry, cavalry and artillery-men passed onward through the cold and cheerless night. Exhausted by the heavy labors to which they had been subjected in the trenches and the fearful ordeal which they had had to face in storming the city, they were totally disheartened by the furious onslaught made by Carolus and Von Dougal. Like frightened sheep they plodded onward with the dejected spirits of defeated men.

Pleikart von Helmstatt consulted long and earnestly with the leaders and finally decided to raise the siege, taking with them the guns and such of the camp equipage as was necessary. This decision was hastened by the arrival of a courier from Marshal Horn with the information that General Ald-

ringer was pressing forward to the relief of Villingen, with a large force of Bohemians who had defeated a body of French reinforcements at Donaueschingen two days before.

At early dawn the retreat began, and by noon on the following day, nothing was left of the proud army which had settled down before the walls of the stubborn little fortress, except the hastily thrown up trenches, broken and shattered wagons, camp equipments, and the thousands of dead and frozen bodies of horses and men of the invading army which dotted the fields, meadows and trenches.

The failure to break the force of the Imperialists at Singen and the surrounding districts, necessitated the removal of the entire garrison from Rothweil, and the pressure of the overwhelming forces of Bohemians and Italians under the Count of Feria, who closed about Horn from the southwest and southeast, changed the entire complexion of the war in southwestern Germany.

Gerold was apprised of the arrival of General Aldringer and immediately called a council. This resulted in a decision to make a demonstration and a general reconnoitre in the district about Villingen, as soon as the reinforcements arrived.

Willing hands assisted in the rebuilding of the walls, and throughout the city, great activity was manifested. The great stones were placed in position and in the course of a week, the city was again surrounded by a solid wall. The ramparts rose layer upon layer, and the moat was again cleared of its obstructions.

General Aldringer with three thousand men entered the gates amid the rejoicing of the inhabitants, and, for the first time in many months, the depressed spirits of the burghers rose to feelings of positive joy.

The rebuilding of the St. John Tower was attended with great ceremonies and, in a short space of time, it again reared its lofty battlements far above the surrounding plain.

The removal of the troops from Rothweil was noted with

keen satisfaction by Gerold, and he immediately planned to attack and recapture the city if possible. An expedition for this purpose was fitted out, and in a few days, despite the bitterly cold weather and generally inclement season, Carolus von Haisus, assisted by Wilhelm von Dougal and colonels Aescher and Ascanio left the city at the head of nearly three thousand men. General Aldringer remained in Villingen to nurse a wound received at Singen, but nearly one half of his force of Bohemians was under Carolus's orders.

The entire command reached Deislingen without opposition, and when Carolus found that Rothweil had received no further reinforcements, but remained in a denuded and somewhat defenceless condition, he decided to push ahead and make a bold dash for the city, leaving his artillery and infantry to catch up with him. The expedition suffered greatly from exposure, but discipline and enthusiasm overcame the severe work and bodily fatigue of the force.

The artillery, taken from the trenches of the invaders before the walls of Villingen, was hauled league after league over the hills and depressions, and the jaded horses were unharnessed only when within half a day's march of the city's walls.

Carolus appeared under the walls of Rothweil in the early evening, and promptly summoned the fortress to surrender. The small force of men left to garrison the four gates of the city declined to consider the summons, except on the authority of their superior officers who were at Singen.

Carolus's command, exhausted by the work and fatigue of the winter expedition, settled down before the walls of the city and awaited the arrival of the artillery which was ordered forward during the night. Again the jaded horses were harnessed to the lumbering machines and they finally arrived in the early morning hours. A blinding snow-storm added to the discomfort of the Imperialists, but as daylight broke upon the sea of white with which the whole landscape was flooded, the guns were placed in position.

In an hour the south gate was shattered by shot and shell, and although the garrison replied with the few guns which they were able to serve, the resistance was feeble. Two gates and the walls around them were soon reduced by the excellent fire, while preparations were made for storming the city. Dividing the command, Carolus placed Rheinhold in charge of one division, while Von Dougal, with the pikemen and musketeers, was ordered to storm the south gate.

Under cover of the guns they advanced in small, detached bodies. When within a few hundred yards of the south gate, Von Dougal massed the pikemen in the centre, and posted the musketeers on the flanks. A fusilade upon the walls was steadily kept up as the pikemen stormed the gate. The frozen moat was passed, and as the pikemen scrambled up the levelled heaps of stone, it was noticed that a white flag was hoisted upon the rampart. Carolus, who took a position in the rear of the musketeers, gave the order to cease firing, and instructed them to follow the pikemen who had gained the rampart. The Bohemians pushed on, and, despite the fact that the fortress had capitulated, struck right and left, and with furious cries, slaughtered several dozen Swedes and Württembergers.

Carolus noted the breach of discipline, and although he signalled again, no attention was paid to his orders. A deadly glitter shone from his eyes as he took the musketeers under his personal orders, and swiftly mounted the incline at the top of which the pikemen were engaged in fierce conflict with the garrison. He jumped upon a slight elevation and ordered the buglers at his side again to sound the signal. He waited a few moments and then gave orders to Rheinhold. A terrific volley of musketry was fired squarely into the dense masses of struggling men, Bohemians, Swedes, and Württembergers, and dozens of them sank upon the snow-covered stones, mingling their blood with that of their enemies.

Again the signal was given by the buglers, and again the

muskets were loaded and primed. Carolus stood unmoved and pointed to the white flag with his sword, as the astonished pikemen ceased their brutal work.

The sight of their dead and wounded countrymen roused them to fury, and in accordance with the yell of a subaltern who seemed the ring-leader, they rushed with levelled weapons upon Rheinhold's musketeers. Carolus called to them to halt, but noting the desperate and inflamed condition of the men, raised his sword.

"Attention!" he cried to his men. The muskets were raised, and again covered the advancing Bohemians.

"Halt!" he cried, in a terrible voice, to the advancing Bohemians. No attention was paid to his orders, and then Carolus, white with anger, and furious at the mutinous conduct of the soldiers under him, again dropped his sword.

"Fire!"

From the mouths of two hundred muskets the deadly hail of bullets poured into the dense throng of pikemen, when only a few yards separated them. Three or fourscore fell, and the remainder, paralyzed with fear and astonishment, raised their weapons in submission.

A large body of pikemen and musketeers were ascending the ruins of the walls, and Carolus, with a stern face, commanded them to surround the mutinous Bohemians. This movement was quickly executed. Carolus, after ordering the walls to be occupied by the first body of musketeers, walked slowly to the captive Bohemians.

He stopped before Colonel Ascanio, and said:

"Disarm those men, and take them, duly guarded, to the square inside the gate. I will attend to them later. That man," he said, pointing to a savage-featured and desperate-looking subaltern officer, "is responsible for this deplorable episode. Chain and guard him until later. We have other work to do now."

In an hour the whole city was in possession of the Imperialists. Von Dougal had charge of the south gate, while

Carolus, at the head of a large force, rode through the city, and took possession of the prefecture.

When order was somewhat established, and the inhabitants found what manner of man their conqueror was, they appeared on street and alley, and hundreds friendly to the cause for which Carolus stood, greeted him with enthusiasm.

Even those opposed to the Imperialists, by reason of the bitter hatred which characterized the fanatics of that virulent period, looked upon him with sullen respect. The news of the summary punishment which he had dealt out to the violators of the rule of civilized warfare had preceded him, and friend and foe alike looked upon the fine, soldierly man as he rode at the head of his troops, with mingled feelings of deference, admiration, and curiosity.

Colonels Aescher and Ascanio, later in the day, assumed command of the walls. The small garrison was securely housed in the old barracks, and treated as prisoners of war.

In the prefecture, many valuable state papers were seized, and several, bearing upon immediate operations, were despatched by special couriers to Villingen, together with a brief report to Sir Gerold von Ebertus, of the short siege, bombardment, and capture of Rothweil. The brutal and inexcusable assault upon the surrendered garrison by the Bohemian pikemen, almost under the shadow of the flag of capitulation, he keenly regretted, and deprecated the extreme measures to which he had been compelled to resort, to bring his soldiers to a sense of duty and mercy.

When Carolus had finished his report and carefully arranged the valuable papers which were found at the prefecture, he called Rheinhold to him for consultation, and sent an orderly to Von Dougal asking his attendance. Carolus surveyed the prefecture with much curiosity, and walked from room to room examining the contents of the various official desks. He was engaged in sorting additional papers of value, and did not notice the entrance of a tall, athletic-looking man.

The stranger walked slowly to the desk where Carolus was seated, and placed his hand softly on his shoulder. He looked up as he felt the pressure of a hand, and his features relaxed immediately. He rose quickly to his feet, and extended his hand.

"You are welcome. Konrad von Horgen, it pleases me to see you."

"Ah, Carolus! No more welcome face has entered this city in weeks. I am proud to press your hands. May God be kind and protect you always."

Konrad was visibly affected as he spoke, and his body seemed to sway as he shook Carolus's hands.

"I forgot, my friend, that you had been dangerously wounded. Pray, be seated. You look pale and weak. Let me send for some wine," said Carolus, as he looked at the convalescent soldier, and insisted upon his taking a chair. "Wilhelm von Dougal told me all about it, and he will be pleased to see you. I have sent for him to attend me here, and I expect him almost any minute."

"Von Dougal here? Did he come with you? How is he?" Konrad asked the running fire of questions as he seated himself.

"Yes. He is here. He came with me, and is well. Now, drink this wine and refresh yourself; but tell me, Konrad, is—is—Amalia well, and is she here?"

"Yes, she is here and is as well as can be expected under the circumstances."

"Circumstances? What circumstances?" asked Carolus, as he impatiently regarded Konrad.

"A terrible tragedy was enacted in this building last week and it has well-nigh affected the reason of Madame Klutus and Amalia.

"Who? What?"

Konrad looked gravely at Carolus, then slowly and minutely told of the terrible affray between Huldah and Minerva in the east wing of the prefecture.

Carolus listened to the harrowing story and when Konrad had finished, asked, without evincing more than ordinary curiosity :

"What was the motive for this unusual and disgraceful affair?"

"Gain! The low instinct of covetousness and opportunity for plunder. The opportunity was rare and the spoils adequate, apparently, for Lucretia was a famous collector and generally kept what she gathered unto herself. The devout church-woman and the profligate outlaw met on common ground, and the chase for the effects of the dead relative was furious," answered Konrad.

"It seems scarcely credible for women, however low by nature and instinct, to sink to such a depth of depravity and avarice. Yet I am not surprised after what I have learned of that outcast Huldah. But, that Minerva should be of the same cloth is surprising. When I had the pleasure of living here a year ago, she was the saintly communicant to whom people pointed with reverence," replied Carolus.

Konrad smiled at the words, and added :

"She fooled a great many. Her saintly way was but the cloak, beneath which she covered her real nature, but she is dead—let her rest. She must answer before that higher tribunal for her hypocrisy and evil deeds here."

The door of the apartment opened and Wilhelm von Dougal entered. He glanced quickly into the room and as he beheld his friend, he rushed to him and kissed him on both cheeks.

"God be praised for your recovery, my dear friend. I am delighted to see you again." Von Dougal took both his hands and gazed long and fondly at Konrad, who rose hastily as Von Dougal entered the room.

"My friend, I, too, am gratified beyond expression to see you and to be convinced that you are alive and well. You know we have heard only indirectly ; and your mother——"

"Ah, my mother! My mother! Is she well? Does she know that I am here?" quickly broke in Von Dougal.

"Not that I know. She is well, but I will send to her at once and acquaint her with the fact. Ring that bell, Wilhelm; it ought to be done now," replied Konrad, "but do not let me interfere with your important business. I feel as though I were an interloper here."

"Nay, Konrad. You remain here and confer with us, after you have sent the message. I will close our conference with due despatch and then Von Dougal shall see his mother."

Rheinhold now entered and was presented to Konrad von Horgen, and the plans for holding and strengthening the city were duly perfected.

Von Dougal departed with Konrad, and Carolus slowly and with suppressed excitement walked to the west wing of the prefecture. He hesitated once or twice but, finally, reached the apartments where Martha von Klutus and her daughter resided.

In reply to Carolus's knock, a servant appeared and ushered him into the general sitting-room where Egon and Amalia had so often exchanged confidences and where Carolus's name was most often mentioned.

He waited impatiently for a time, examining all the little articles of feminine taste which were abundantly evidenced in the bright and cheery room. He looked fondly at the portrait of Amalia which hung on the wall of the room in the place of honor. His eyes wandered from one place to another until they finally rested on an embroidery frame which seemed to have been recently left. A playful kitten was rolling a ball of silk around the pedestal of the frame.

Carolus smiled as he noted the nimble antics of the animal and drawing his sword gave the ball a sudden impetus. The kitten dashed after the escaping ball, only to find it launched off in another direction by Carolus. From the kitten, his eyes fell upon the embroidery in the frame and he stood before it to decipher its possible design.

A smile came to his face as he noted the well-known device which belonged to his family. His crest, beautifully done in gold, silver, blue, and red, seemed to brighten under his gaze and a wonderfully soft and tender expression gathered on his handsome and clear-cut face as he bent closer to examine the work of love.

With a sudden bound, the kitten landed at the top of his boots and clung to them as if in challenge for the renewal of the combat with the ball of silk. Carolus turned quickly and spun the ball across the room, laughing heartily at the antics of the friendly little animal. The door opened suddenly and Amalia, pale and trembling, but with a happy smile, entered the room. She noted the pretty little scene as her eyes followed her pet kitten. Confused and hesitating, she walked to Carolus and extended her hand. The warm blood suffused her face as she spoke :

"I am glad to greet you, Herr von Haisus. You are very welcome here." She looked at Carolus as he tried to grasp his sword and scabbard in his left hand, in the usual awkward manner of a man surprised in the midst of a trivial and undignified occupation. A bright laugh broke from her lips and a bantering expression came into her eyes as she said :

"You will scarcely need your sword here. I never knew that a drawn sword was required in our peaceable apartments. Surely, I am not dangerous?"

"No, Amalia, only that little fellow that follows in your wake and who launches the shafts which beam in your eyes." He bent low as he took her hand and kissed it. "I am very happy to see you again." He looked into her fine eyes and a tender glance rested on her fair face.

Amalia was greatly confused, but with the usual tact of a woman who is certain of her position, turned the subject again into a bantering vein.

"Oh, do put up your sword. You will surely cut yourself if you do not exercise care."

"To cut oneself in the left hand for the privilege of hold-

ing such a lovely hand in the right, is compensation enough, Amalia. However, if it disturbs you, I will put it in its proper place," and Carolus shoved the long sabre into its scabbard.

"There! Now the kitten will have to find another play-fellow," he said, as he led Amalia to the carved bench that backed against the enormous tile stove.

Amalia, with rare tact, evaded any further tendencies to ardent love-making on the part of Carolus, but gradually led him to talk of himself, and finally launched him into the engrossing story of Villingen, and the trying ordeal through which the little fortress had successfully passed.

The soldier instinct was aroused, and Carolus vividly portrayed the various scenes, the skirmishes, and the hardships which its defenders had witnessed and endured. Amalia listened to the narrative with rapt attention, and when Carolus reached that portion which referred to Hugo von Westphal's escape with Frey and Egon, their subsequent hardships, and the tragic death of the brave Rothweil soldier and noble, her sweet face contracted in pain, and tears rolled down her cheeks.

Carolus reproached himself with being hard-hearted and too blunt in the maiden's presence, and excused himself for his roughness.

"I ought to have known better than to add additional sorrow to your dear heart by the rehearsal of such brutal scenes, but, my dear Amalia, I always act first and think afterward. I am very sorry to have caused you any pain, and I will stop."

"No, Carolus! Do not stop. I can hear the rest now, and I wish you to tell me the whole story."

Carolus, with some misgivings, related the story in detail. When he reached the sudden and unexpected meeting of Von Dougal, Anna, and Egon, Amalia's face lighted with pleasure. She interrupted Carolus's narrative:

"And Egon escaped? Is he now in Villingen? Is he

well? The poor dear boy must have heard of his mother's death!"

She again winced under the recollections of the death of Lucretia and of the tragedy which had occurred soon afterward in her former apartments, which had ended Minerva's life and laid Huldah at death's door.

Carolus intuitively divined the cause of her dejection, and did not immediately answer her questions. When she looked again into his eyes, he continued :

"Yes, Egon is in Villingen with his father. He heard of his mother's death during one of the most touching scenes I ever witnessed, and of which I will tell you some other time."

"Thank God for his deliverance from those who would not only have perverted his character, but would have darkened the life of Sir Gerold."

"Ah, Amalia, you cannot over-estimate the fine, manly spirit of that boy. During the darkest hours of the storm which hovered over our devoted city, he stood beside his father morning and night. At the council-room, in the barracks, and upon the walls amid the flying missiles of death, he stood unflinchingly and without fear in the midst of it all, and yet, when the deeds of violence were over, he sobbed and lamented with the tender heart of a woman. Egon is a strange boy, and I frankly admit that I only imperfectly understand him."

Madame von Klutus entered the room, and the narrative was brought to a close. She advanced to Carolus with a pleased but worried look, and welcomed him to her house. After a few moments she asked abruptly :

"Have you any tidings from Sir Werner?"

She looked at Carolus with suppressed excitement.

"No, Madame. We have heard nothing from him since we received a friendly and timely warning from him, dated at Kappel," answered Carolus.

"Friendly and timely?" asked Madame Klutus, in a strained voice.

"Yes, Madame; friendly and timely. His warning was the means of breaking up as foul a plot in Villingen as he was instrumental in carrying out in Rothweil. Sir Werner has redeemed himself in our eyes, and has in a measure atoned for his treachery."

Madame Klutus covered her face with her hands and wept. Amalia, unable to suppress her feelings, rose from the bench and passed to a window, entirely overcome by the terrible recollections of the past few weeks. A welling hope burst from the depths of her heart, and she clasped her hands in silent prayer for her father's peace of mind. Carolus again reproached himself for his want of delicacy in the explanation which he had so bluntly given, but he consoled himself by the thought that there was nothing more to add, and that the subject was exhausted.

He related much and answered many questions with which the two women plied him, until Von Dougal returned and asked for an immediate interview. The two men quickly entered the room of the prefecture proper, and Von Dougal, closing the door quickly and without any preparatory words, said:

"D'Arville, at the head of three thousand men, is within a day's march of Rothweil. He has French, Scotch, and Germans with him. It is now nearly midday, and he will be here by to-morrow. The wall is down at the south gate, and the Bohemians are not to be depended upon. I have the information of D'Arville's return from a courier, who was sent under the supposition that Rothweil was still in their hands."

"Where is the man?" quickly asked Carolus.

"At the barracks."

"Go at once with me."

Carolus hurriedly departed with Von Dougal, escorted by a small body of troopers, and in a short time he had the captured courier before them.

The courier was a small, wiry, and keen fellow. He looked defiantly at Carolus as he was brought before him.

Carolus measured him at a glance, and before questioning him, said :

"In order to save time, and also to save yourself from unpleasant surroundings, you will answer any questions I may ask you without reserve. You are a prisoner, and your treatment will depend upon your truthfulness. Do you depart but one finger-breadth from the truth and I will astonish you. You remember the lift I gave you from your horse when you were under orders from Von Gultlingen, do you not ? "

The courier's face and manner changed instantly. He said simply, and with respect :

"I do. I feel the effects of your handling yet."

"Very well, then, be careful and speak the truth," said Carolus.

Question after question was asked and with apparent truth the man answered them all promptly. Carolus gleaned from him that D'Arville was ordered back to Rothweil to relieve it of its defenceless position. Marshal Horn had drawn sufficient troops to Singen amply to prepare for the Count of Feria's expected attack. In the event of a defeat, he needed Rothweil to fall back upon and therefore decided to strengthen it against a possible attack from Villingen. Three thousand men, French, Scotch, and Germans were under D'Arville's command. The courier was to ride with the utmost haste and acquaint the few officers who were left to guard Rothweil, of his approach. The courier refused to state the make up of the troops under D'Arville and neither promises nor threats failed to shake his determination.

Carolus was satisfied, however, with the information and remanded the prisoner to his quarters. He conferred with Von Dougal and the result of their conference was, that a strong force should meet the enemy and, in the event of failure to check them, they were to fall back on Rothweil. Preparations were immediately made. Carolus was to remain at Rothweil and put the fortress under the best possible defence, while Von Dougal, with fifteen hundred Bohemians and all of the cavalry, was to advance and meet D'Arville.

CHAPTER XLII.

GEROLD AND ALDRINGER.

GEROLD was walking up and down the apartment which he liked best and to which he always retreated when a specially perplexing problem was to be solved. His brows were contracted and the strong lines of his face showed marked impatience. He walked to the table, took up the paper which he had read through twice before and after carefully scanning it, resumed his walking :

"Too bad," he mused to himself, "and at such a time, when every available man is pressed into the service of his country—too bad !"

He continued his pacing for several minutes and then stopped again at the table. He was lost in deep thought.

"Aldringer will be furious and the facts may lead to serious complications ! However, it is better over with now—"

He rang a bell and Kuno quietly entered the room.

"My compliments to General Aldringer, and I wish to see him here on important business forthwith."

Kuno bowed and left the room.

"Ha ! It may mean mutiny here, too ! If it does——"

Gerold did not complete his sentence. It was unnecessary. His mobile features were transformed. The regular lines of his face resolved themselves into the fearful and unrelenting hardness which completely changed the appearance of this remarkable man. He sat down at the table and quickly wrote an order to Carolus. His features contracted and re-

laxed as he wrote on. Once, a faint smile illuminated his face. When he finished the paper he wrote an order directing Wilhelm von Dougal to assume the command of the fortress of Rothweil. He closed and sealed the document. He also wrote an order for General Aldringer, folded it and laid it on top of Carolus's report of the capture of Rothweil.

A few minutes afterward a knock at the door announced an arrival.

"Enter," said Gerold, and as the door opened, Kuno ushered General Aldringer into the room. Gerold advanced to him.

"I have sent for you for two reasons, General. First, because I have some good news and some bad news; and second, because I wish to make a personal explanation in reference to the bad news. Perhaps the simplest and best way will be for you to read the report of Carolus von Haisus from Rothweil."

Aldringer looked curiously at Gerold as he delivered himself and a worried look came over his face as he noted the grave, quiet eyes of Gerold measuring him as though he would read his soul.

"Be seated, General, and read slowly and calmly. Save yourself any undue excitement as it will not alter matters."

Aldringer sat in the chair vacated by Gerold and commenced to read with great rapidity. Gradually his face changed from intense curiosity to alarm and then to anger of no ordinary kind. He half rose to his feet as Carolus described the mutiny of the Bohemian pikemen and the summary and terrible punishment he had meted out to them. As he concluded the report, he stood up and faced Gerold, crushing the report in his hand. His anger was intense and his eyes fairly burned with hate and desire for revenge. Gerold met his gaze with calmness but said nothing. The bulky form of the Bavarian heaved with suppressed excitement. He threw the report on the table and in a loud voice said:

"Sir Gerold, this is murder ! I will have an eye for an eye, by the almighty saints."

"General Aldringer, it is not only not murder, but simple justice—harsh though it be."

"Do you defend such an outrage ?" He pointed his finger at Gerold as he retreated a step in astonishment.

"I do ! And would do the same thing if it annihilated one half of my troops—in the face of an overwhelming enemy."

General Aldringer looked at Gerold as if stupified. He could scarcely believe the evidence of his own ears. So extreme and unusual a measure seemed out of all proportion to the rather easy-going soldier, and the revelation simply overpowered him. His fury rose as he fully understood the position and he shook his finger menacingly in Gerold's face as he said :

"He is responsible to me and is the cause of the loss of innocent and friendly life. I will revenge myself in kind."

"General Aldringer, you alone are responsible for the deplorable and sad matter. You alone ! Do you hear me ?"

Gerold advanced a couple of steps and the stern lines came again to his face as he raised his voice :

"You, a general of the Imperialists, who maintain such lax discipline among your men that they respect not the token and sign of submission in an enemy, are responsible not alone for the excesses which were taking place, but for the result."

Gerold continued to advance upon the astounded general and his voice rang through the room like a bugle sound as he continued :

"And with this fearful responsibility resting upon you, you have the temerity to criticise a noble for insisting on the proper observance of civilized warfare and threaten reprisals upon an officer, who simply did his duty ! What manner of soldier are you and under whom did you learn your method of warfare ? Do you come among us to add to the shameless excesses that are dignified by the name of war ?

Do the principles for which you are fighting allow such latitude and develop nothing better than the ruthless barbarity that would disgrace the Tartars?"

"Rather take that star from your breast, launch out as an irresponsible adventurer, and appear before friend and foe as the man-hunter and outcast. To such infractions on human mercy and forbearance, are attributable the horrors which are devastating our Fatherland and relegating all civilization into chaos. General Aldringer, it is well for you that these troublous times require the service of every man or your threats would have been the last you would have uttered in your present position."

Gerold calmly folded his arms and surveyed Aldringer from head to foot.

"Do you mean to threaten me, Sir Gerold?"

"I never threaten, I act!"

"Then there is only one option left me, Sir Gerold."

"And that?" asked Gerold haughtily.

"To depart with my command and bring the necessary punishment to bear on Carolus von Haisus for massacring my soldiers."

"You will do neither. You will act strictly upon my orders and to the letter. Here are your orders and also those of Carolus von Haisus. You are responsible to me for every act and I will visit summary punishment upon you if you depart but one hair's-breadth from the explicit instructions contained therein. Have you forgotten the official notification which you yourself brought me when you entered the city? Do you wish me to read it to you again, General Aldringer? These are your orders. See to it that they are promptly and properly carried out and report to me to-morrow at latest. *Au revoir.*"

General Aldringer was completely overwhelmed by the superior will and conscious power of the man before him. His rage left him as he comprehended the gulf that separated them and the uselessness of opposing this extraordinary man.

Although stung to the quick by the harshness of Carolus's action and in the full belief that it was an act but slightly, if at all removed, from murder, the accusation made by Gerold, that he was himself the responsible cause for the deplorable result, put an entirely new light on the subject. The soldier came to the front and the aggrieved individual vanished. With a curious mixture of resentment, hatred, subordination, and admiration, he straightened himself to his full height and though he towered far above Gerold, he was conscious of his own inferiority in the presence of this man. After a few more seconds of inward struggle, he asked :

"What are your wishes, Sir Gerold?"

"This will explain," said Gerold, as he advanced rapidly to the table and handed General Aldringer the paper which read as follows :

"To GENERAL ALDRINGER,
"Villingen.

"You will, within forty-eight hours, depart with the Bohemian troops under your command. You will garrison His Majesty's fortress, Rothweil, report yourself and place your command under the orders of Wilhelm von Dougal who is appointed Commandant of the fortress and dependencies.

"Given under my hand and seal at Villingen,

"February 26, 1634.

"GEROLD VON EBERTUS.

"Governor."

"Very well, Sir Gerold, they shall be carried out ; but you may depend upon an emphatic protest to Vienna on this outrage."

"As you will ; but take my advice and drop the matter," replied Gerold indifferently.

"I will leave to-day, Sir Gerold, if there is no objection."

"Very well. I will see you at headquarters before you depart. I have other orders to send and I shall have them prepared in an hour. Again, *au revoir*, General Aldringer."

The Bavarian saluted, and with a firm heavy tread, left the apartment for his quarters. That afternoon the Bohemians left Villingen and were soon lost sight of in a light snow-storm which settled down over the uplands and which blotted out the landscape with a soft white mantle.

CHAPTER XLIII.

CAROLUS RETURNS TO VILLINGEN.

VON DOUGAL left Rothweil before dawn and departed in a southeasterly direction to intercept D'Arville. He had reached Altstadt and halted. Scouts were sent over three roads to ascertain the whereabouts of the expected enemy. An hour passed and one of the men, riding at top speed, returned. His horse was nearly spent from exertion. He galloped into Altstadt and jumped from his steed in the greatest excitement. In a few seconds, he was in Von Dougal's presence.

"D'Arville's cavalry is less than half a league away. At least one thousand mounted troopers and some guns are in the advance guard. I was discovered and followed. I barely escaped," said the man breathlessly.

While the scout was making the explanations, a number of shots and loud cries were heard on the main road. A few score of French cavalry were already on the edge of the village. Von Dougal rushed out of the room and the bugles sounded the alarm. From all sides the cavalry gathered and a furious hand-to-hand encounter began instantly. Foot by foot, and rod by rod, the fighting cavalymen were pressed back by the advancing Frenchmen. Rheinhold, who commanded the Bohemian pikemen, was half a league away on the opposite side of the depression in which Altstadt lay.

The troopers of Ascanio and Aescher were slowly but surely being pressed backward. Furiously they contested every inch of the village, but superior numbers told against

them, and when Von Dougal had ordered the few dozen musketeers to retreat upon the positions of the pikemen, he gathered the whole force of his troopers for a determined attack on the close ranks of the allied forces.

A furious and desperate charge resulted, which failed, however, to check the advance. When he was in imminent danger of being surrounded he ordered the retreat. Then commenced a wild stampede for safety, and a junction with the pikemen under Rheinhold. Through the village, between houses, barns, through orchards and over hedges the troopers under Von Dougal rushed in wild flight. All order was forgotten and a panic seemed to take possession of the Imperialists.

Vainly he tried to stem the tide. With heroic efforts and great personal danger he charged right and left calling upon his men. A few dozen responded and at the head of this small body Von Dougal charged desperately into the cloud of advancing horsemen. The wedge split the body of foreigners in twain, but beyond this, nothing was gained, except a few moments' time. Von Dougal still headed the daring riders, and as they gained the rear of the column they wheeled and, making a detour, fell back to the position held by Rheinhold, closely pursued and keeping up a running fight with small, detached bodies of D'Arville's riders.

After a hard fight they succeeded in reaching the pikemen who were drawn up in battle array to block the advance. Both roads leading to Rothweil were held by the pikemen, and Von Dougal's riders who had recovered from their consternation and panic were gathering on the flanks of the foot folk.

Von Dougal again assumed command, but he had great misgivings as to the eventful outcome of the battle which was imminent. The Bohemians grumbled at the cold and exposure and were in no mood to undertake the desperate defence which was about to be demanded by Von Dougal. The slaughter of their countrymen by Carolus rankled in

their bosoms and a dangerous, rebellious feeling animated them. Their own officers encouraged them quietly and a tacit understanding was reached, whereby in the event of special circumstances, they were to obey their own officers.

D'Arville's riders made no attack upon the joined forces, and hour after hour, nothing was done except by small bodies who were ascertaining the strength and position of the opposing bodies of troops. Numerous sharp encounters took place during the day and as the evening drew near, Von Dougal determined to retreat upon Rothweil. Camp fires were left burning and numbers of cavalry were kept moving from one place to another, to replenish the fires and hoodwink the enemy. During the cold and cheerless night the retreat continued, and at midnight the forces under Von Dougal passed the gates and entered the city, chilled in body and depressed in spirits.

Feverish preparations were made to get the city in position to defend itself against the returning enemy. Carolus personally superintended the work and by night the weakest points had been materially strengthened. At dawn the work was continued and the entire garrison was ordered out to repair the walls. Small parties scouted on the outskirts but no enemy came into sight. The day passed on to evening. The non arrival of the expected force was as wearing as it was inexplicable. Finally, after the greatest suspense, a large body of troops was seen moving in two columns along the roads leading to Rothweil.

In the gathering gloom the black, moving bodies could be distinguished on the snowy plains as they moved slowly and steadily onward. Every movement was noted and as the darkness of night fell upon the landscape a small body detached itself from one of the columns and advanced rapidly under the walls of the city. A fan-fare of bugles sounded through the gates and over the houses and walls of the city.

"What can that mean, Rheinhold?" asked Carolus who noted every move made by the enemy.

"That is a friendly signal, Carolus."

An officer of the Bohemians moved rapidly to Carolus and in great excitement said :

"Those are my countrymen, apparently, but I cannot understand it. It is our signal to assemble."

"Then reply quickly with your bugles," said Carolus, as he glanced significantly at Rheinhold.

A blast sounded upon the keen wintry night, and it was answered by the small knot of horsemen below. Carolus walked to a projecting abutment and called loudly to those below :

"Who are you?"

"Messengers from General Aldringer. Open the gates."

"Where from?"

"Villingen."

"Is that General Aldringer's column beyond?"

"Yes; we are carrying our wounded with us. Open quickly, these are our orders."

Carolus motioned Rheinhold to him and a moment later was joined by Von Dougal. Together the three descended the steps and prepared to open the small gate, behind which a heavy force of musketeers was posted. The fuses were in the hands of the artillerymen on the wall and everything was in readiness for instant action. Carolus opened the gates with his own hand and ordered the officer in charge of the little knot of horsemen to advance and dismount. The man quickly entered and saluted saying :

"We have met a large body of the enemy and rubbed them up badly to-day. We have nearly two hundred wounded within half a league of the city."

"How long since you left Villingen?" asked Carolus.

"At noon yesterday. Here is an order from Sir Gerold von Ebertus to Carolus von Haisus and another to Herr Wilhelm von Dougal," continued the officer.

Carolus took the paper and broke the seal. Rheinhold held aloft a lantern and by its dim light Carolus read as follows :

"To COL. CAROLUS VON HAISUS,

"Rothweil.

"You are hereby summoned and required to depart immediately from Rothweil, with your troops, excepting artillery, together with Colonels Ascanio and Aescher and their commands, and report at Villingen without loss of time. Wilhelm von Dougal is hereby appointed commandant of Rothweil and its dependencies, and will take command immediately on your departure. General Aldringer, bearer of this communication, will report to Von Dougal with his troops. Given under my hand and seal at Villingen,

"February 24, 1634.

"GEROLD VON EBERTUS,

"Governor."

Carolus read the communication carefully, folded it and put it in his doublet. He turned to the officer and said :

"My bugler will accompany you. His signals will be promptly answered and General Aldringer is to enter the city by this gate."

Carolus motioned to Rheinhold and Von Dougal and together they again ascended the steps to the wall. They entered the room adjoining the tower and as the door closed, Carolus turned quickly upon his friends :

"What can this mean?"

"Probably that the measures which you applied to the Bohemians have produced a mutiny at Villingen," answered Rheinhold.

"We shall take due care that nothing of the kind happens here then," replied Carolus quietly.

"Read your orders Von Dougal ; perhaps they throw light on the subject," suggested Rheinhold. Von Dougal opened the communication and read as follows :

"To HERR WILHELM VON DOUGAL,

"Rothweil.

"You are hereby appointed commandant of Rothweil and

its dependencies, subject to the powers vested in me as governor of the district of Villingen, Rothweil, etc. General Aldringer and his command are hereby placed under your orders.

“ Given under my hand and seal at Villingen,

“ February 24, 1634.

“ GEROLD VON EBERTUS,

“ *Governor.*”

As Von Dougal opened the paper a small package carefully sealed, fell to the floor. He picked it up and as he held it to the light, he read the address on the same. He smiled as he handed it to Carolus and said :

“ I thought it singular that all these orders should come on here without an explanation. This undoubtedly will convey to you that which is lacking.”

Carolus broke the seals after carefully examining the address and the marks. He sat down on a chair and drew the light towards him. After opening it, he glanced at the signature and read as follows :

“ VILLINGEN, February 24, 1634.

“ MY FRIEND :

“ The orders which were undoubtedly delivered to you by General Aldringer may seem strange in the light of my personal instructions to you, but after revolving in my mind the changed aspect of affairs which presented themselves to me and which were produced by your just, yet harsh treatment of the Bohemian troops, I decided that it was the only course left.

“ The early return of the enemy upon Villingen is a foregone conclusion. You are needed here in such an eventuality. The furious anger of Aldringer over the treatment of his soldiers is a matter of great moment and danger lurks in any fortification where such discordant elements come into touch with each other.

“ Aldringer swore to be revenged and demanded an ‘ eye

for an eye.' I succeeded in bringing him to a realizing sense of his duty and he departs this day from Villingen to assist in garrisoning Rothweil. I advise Von Dougal to gather his best friends around him and to press every man into service, who is capable of bearing arms. He ought to have five thousand men at his call within a month, including the three thousand under Aldringer.

"Make haste and return to Villingen with all the troops, as this city is badly depleted by Aldringer's departure. I will explain in detail as soon as I have the pleasure of again grasping your hand. My respects to Rheinhold, Von Dougal, Ascanio, and Aescher.

"Your friend,

"GEROLD."

A frown gathered on Carolus's face as he handed the letter to Von Dougal to read. He moved his extended legs on the points of his spurs in an abstracted way making zig-zags on the wooden floor of the room. When Von Dougal finished the letter, he handed it back to Carolus who threw it across the table to Rheinhold.

"I think he is right, Carolus, on second thought," said Von Dougal.

"So do I; but I do not like Aldringer's threat. I should like to argue the question with this. Carolus patted the hilt of his sword as he looked at Von Dougal.

"That would simply add to the difficulty, my friend, and would prove nothing. You acted strictly within your discretions and according to my mind, justly. Evidently, Aldringer will avoid a meeting with you and it is better thus. Let it so remain. I will manage Aldringer and his title with ease. He is vain and ordinary, but he is our friend and fights for our cause," replied Von Dougal.

Rheinhold returned the letter to Carolus and agreed with Von Dougal. He added:

"We should return as soon as possible. Can we leave to-morrow early?"

"Yes. We will install Aldringer here and make our preparations at the same time. You, Rheinhold, take the necessary steps and have the command ready by daybreak."

Aldringer entered the city and amid great rejoicing the loyal burghers formed a torch-light procession. They headed the Bohemians and marched them to the barracks in the various parts of the city. The wounded were quickly cared for and in an hour the Bavarian general was closeted in the prefecture with Von Dougal. They had a long conference and, as a result, the occupation of the city was divided between Konrad von Horgen and Aldringer.

Early on the following morning, fifteen hundred cavalry and foot folk left Rothweil amid the resounding cheers of six thousand soldiers and civilians.

As Carolus reached the south gate, mounted on his horse, Von Dougal pressed his hands and two great glistening tears rolled down his cheeks.

"God bless you, my friend, and protect you," he said. Carolus, no less moved, laid his hands on his head but said nothing. As he passed out of the gate he saw General Aldringer standing in the niche of the wall. Carolus straightened himself and saluted the Bavarian who gave no sign of recognition and paid no attention to the courtesy.

On the evening of the following day, Carolus, the Villingen troops and the commands of Ascanio and Aescher, entered the St. Francis Gate amid the booming cannons and the thundering cheers of the garrison and inhabitants.

CHAPTER XLIV.

GEROLD'S WEDDING.

DAYS and weeks passed in comparative peace. The force of the winter was broken by the soft winds that rolled upward and across the glistening Alps, from the flowering plains and tempered seas of the south. The heralds of spring sounded the knell of dying winter and again the storks occupied their northern homes. The meadows changed from sombre brown to the pale-greens; and the purling brooks, swollen by the rains, tumbled and tossed down the hillsides with noisy accompaniment and sparkling movement in the brilliant sunlight.

Welcome spring had arrived and the husbandman, tired of military discipline, gladly exchanged the sabre for the plow. Not, however, without misgivings for the result of his labors did the peasant measure the possible harvest as the busy plowshare revealed the ghastly reminders of the harvest of death reaped during the eventful winter just passed.

The foreign invaders were driven back into central Germany and the gathering hosts under Wallenstein were concentrating for the final struggle in the southeastern sections of the Fatherland. Baden, southern Würtemberg, and western Bavaria, were thus temporarily relieved of the horrors of war which had devastated the country for seventeen years. Months of peaceful pursuits seemed assured to the picturesque uplands and the inhabitants again resumed their wonted occupations.

Egon pursued his studies under the conscientious care and direction of Breno, and discoursed with increasing enthusiasm upon the themes of his studies with Gerold. A new and tender light came to the father's eyes as he noted the fine qualities of the boy. A new future gleamed with a rosy light, and the father's fond hopes of a happy and useful life for his son seemed certain now of fruition.

As Gerold allowed his mind to dwell upon the happiness which now seemed assured to him the sorrows and bitter recollections of the past faded slowly away.

Secure in his exalted position, endowed with great capacity, quick to grasp the opportunities that were within his reach and encircled with the love of a noble woman, his heart and mind expanded into the beautiful blossom of contentment. Honored by his sovereign and his people, adored by his mother and son, and respected even by his enemies, he set about the work of strengthening the district which was under his jurisdiction against further attack. His cheerfulness of manner dispelled the deep foreboding which had grown almost to conviction, in the minds of his townsmen, that the successful resistance of Villingen would bring down the future wrath of the Protestant league, and that special efforts would be made to avenge the fearful losses which the stout-hearted burghers had inflicted upon their enemies.

Sohertler and his cabal of conspirators were duly tried before the civil magistrates elected to succeed him, and sentenced to a heavy fine. They were sufficiently punished by their long imprisonment and the disgrace which attached to their incarceration and conviction. They were also deprived of their civil rights and subjected to surveillance for a period of a year. Sohertler felt the degradation keenly, and his usually thin figure seemed to waste and bend under the disgrace. His imperious and top-lofty manner left him, and he rapidly degenerated into an intellectual and physical wreck. Breno, kind-hearted and self-sacrificing, attended him daily

and tried to cheer his depressed and failing spirit, but it availed nothing.

Carolus and Gerold were constantly together and both worked to their utmost in the administration of the affairs of the district. Carolus made frequent and lengthy visits to Rothweil, and while the anger of the Bohemians under Aldringer softened as the days wore on, the turbulent and lawless men, hardened by years of questionable warfare, never quite forgot the terrible punishment meted out for the breach of discipline under the walls of Rothweil. At such visits, Carolus inquired minutely into the details of the administration of the district under Von Dougal, and together they strengthened the fortifications and improved the morale of the forces detailed for garrison duty.

Carolus did not neglect the rare opportunity afforded by his visits to Rothweil, but assiduously courted Amalia. She had recovered from the shock sustained by the treachery of her father, and the terrible tragedy enacted in the prefecture and she developed in beauty and mind. Carolus noted the improvement in the young woman, and from admiration his attentions grew to genuine love and bountiful affection. His tender feelings were roused to their depths, and he threw the whole force of his strong character into the measure of his love.

Amalia reciprocated his affection, and when Carolus offered her his heart and hand, her face was transformed with the great love she felt for him. It was then that he found out the depth of her affection and the strength of her character. When she placed her hands in his, and looked into his eyes, she said slowly and deliberately :

"I did not think that it would be thus. When my father so treacherously betrayed us all, I resolved to forsake this life and retire to the Ursuline Convent. I decided to atone, as far as lay in my power, for the sins committed by him, and to devote my life to those whom he had sold to the enemy. I never thought, Carolus, that repentance would

come to him and retribution overtake those who had plotted in this house, against the community, the state, and God——”

“You surely were not serious?” interjected Carolus, with a singular feeling of alarm.

“I was not only serious in my thoughts, but had fully decided upon my future,” she answered with a sweet smile.

“Oh, Amalia, you do not know what my love means. I have lived five and thirty years, and the blissful feeling of love never before entered my heart or pulsated through my blood. With you, my dearest, at my side, I can accomplish those things which only inspiration makes possible. With you, I can rise to higher, nobler thoughts and endeavors, and thus it shall be.”

“I believe you, Carolus, and I am certain that nothing is too lofty for your reach, and no effort, well attempted, will fall short of the mark you set for yourself. You are noble, kind, and generous. These are the qualities which drew me to you. I love and respect you, and this with me is as unchangeable as eternity itself.”

Carolus drew the young woman to him, and, suffused with blushes at the intensity of her expression, she nestled her small, well-shaped head on his breast. Thus did Carolus enter into a new life and discover that military routine and municipal administration are not the highest ideals in life or productive of the greatest happiness that can accompany even a warlike and eventful existence. While he did not neglect in the slightest, the duties which devolved upon him, he, nevertheless, spent much time in Amalia's society. After weeks of more than ordinary work, both civil and military, he reluctantly returned to Villingen in response to the repeated requests of Gerold.

Spring had advanced to summer, and the fertile fields again responded to the care of the husbandman, and gave promise of abundant harvests. The peaceful hills and dales lay dreamily under the glowing sun, and the soft, warm

winds rustled and swayed the ripening grain. The song of the harvester took the place of the harsh roll of the drum and the blare of the trumpet.

Elaborate preparations had been made for the wedding of Gerold and Bertha, and the whole city joined with genuine enthusiasm in the preliminary work. Ebertus Thurn was gaily decorated, and the fine old castle was attired in holiday dress. Kuno and the household servants were strung to the highest pitch of excitement. They scrubbed, scraped, and polished the building from gable to dungeon. The Ebertus colors were seen everywhere in token of esteem for the illustrious governor, for on the morrow, the first noble of Villingen was to wed the fairest damsel in its jurisdiction.

Never in its history had such preparations been made for a wedding. All work was to be suspended, and the noble, burgher, and peasant, vied with each other in honoring the hero of the day. Immense barbecues were arranged for, and great feasts were promised. Tithes were relinquished by Gerold, and large tracts of land were divided among the poor and needy in honor of the event. Great casks of wine were distributed among the soldiery, and hundreds of *hochs* to the munificent governor were drunk by the enthusiastic and susceptible troopers.

The Minster was decorated with beautiful garlands, and special services were planned by Breno, who had charge of the religious exercises, and to whom was entrusted the solemn duty of uniting Gerold and Bertha in holy wedlock.

At Carolus's house the excitement was no less intense. Madame von Klutus and Amalia, after much deliberation, decided to undertake the journey to Villingen under an escort in command of Carolus, and were harbored in Carolus's home.

Amalia personally waited on Bertha, and with Anna's assistance, arranged all the necessary details, and perfected the little plans which lie so near the heart of women at such times. Anna was completely charmed with the simplicity

and beauty of the Rothweil maiden and took to her heart the retiring and sensitive young woman who lavished such beautiful affection on those who were dear to her.

Carolus was in the seventh heaven of happiness. His superior, his friend, and his co-laborer was about to enter into an alliance with his sister, and thus two of the most ancient houses of the district were to be welded by the closest ties of relationship. The power, the exalted position, and the boundless wealth of Ebertus, were to be linked with the more modest worth of the equally noble family of which he was the head. The considerations of wealth, however, were secondary in Carolus's estimation. He had learned to love Gerold with an affection which transcended all matters of purely material value. He had valued his friendship, and measured the noble qualities of mind and of heart, and he gladly admitted and declared the honor which Gerold bestowed upon his house, in offering his heart and hand to his sister Bertha.

Gaily the bells tolled in honor of the day, as the sun rose above the dark horizon of the forest, and loudly the guns on the walls boomed the advent of the day upon which the nuptials were to be celebrated. The garrison, resplendent in parade uniforms, was drawn up to act as escort to the governor whom all honored, and upon whom unbounded affection was bestowed by every class within the walls of the tight little fortress.

Gerold sat in his study absorbed in thought. He rose to his feet and walked to the corner of the room where Egon was busily engaged in poring over some manuscripts handed down from former generations. He gazed upon the manly form of his son, and brushed an involuntary tear from his eyes as he addressed him.

"Egon, this is my wedding-day. Do you hear the cannon and the bells? Do you realize what this means to you and me? For many years I have lived in solitude, and passed from day to day without hope, without happiness,

and without peace. For years I suffered the keen anguish of a husband without a wife, a father without a son, and a wanderer without a home. Far in distant lands I saw the sun rise, without caring what the day had in store for me, or the future which lay dark and dismal before me. Under the banners of the King I traversed the fields, forests, plains, and mountains, seeking death, which came not, and gathering into my mantle the honors which were merely empty nothings. Deep within my heart lay the embers of a ruined home and a desolate fireside. Betrayed by the woman who was your mother, tricked by her relatives, and subjected to the dastardly attacks upon my honor by slander and false report, I patiently bore all the odium hurled at me, believing that steadfast faith and firm resolve would be the entering wedge for that future which seemed impossible, and for which I hoped against hope.

"Your sovereign and mine, His Majesty the German Emperor and King of Austria, was not even exempted from the machinations of the evil horde who spread the net of malice and hatred about me to such a degree that escape seemed impossible, and despair the only recourse for a life that had blossomed in all its beauty but a few years before. But God in his infinite mercy ordained otherwise. A few of my steadfast friends, to whom honor was the living principle of their existence and faith, the guiding-star of their efforts, undertook to vindicate me without my knowledge.

"Success crowned their efforts, and, from the depths of despair, they roused me into a nobler, higher life, and obtained from the reluctant King the appointment which I now hold and have so amply defended. My enemies are dead, scattered and discredited, and from the pit which was dug for my grave, I have risen to service and honor to my country. From the wreck of my home, I have gained you, my boy, and have been allowed the great privilege of shaping your future, as a worthy descendant of an ancient and noble house. Upon the desolation of my fireside I am about to

build a home of beauty and of happiness. Do you believe that the boom of the cannon and the chimes of the bells mean to me a new life and a brighter existence, and do you believe that I look with confidence upon the future under such auspices?"

Gerold laid his hand on his son's shoulder, and looked with fond eyes upon the handsome features of his son. With quivering lips and soft eyes, Egon looked into his father's strong face.

"I do, father. I believe you will be happy, and I believe you are worthy of everything good that will come to you. I think I fully understand everything, in spite of the fact that I was poisoned against you, and made to believe you everything but what you are."

"God bless you my son, for this. I have been true to myself and my country even in my darkest hours of trial, and thus I shall ever be. But enough of this. Let us prepare for the ceremony and mingle with those who inhabit this house, which, in due course of time, will descend with its honors, its history, and its wealth upon you."

Gerold locked arms affectionately with his son and together they left the apartment. They walked arm in arm to the rooms below and were immediately greeted by Madame von Ebertus, Anna, and all the household servants of Ebertus's Thurm. Kuno at their head stepped forward and in feeling terms offered the congratulations of the servitors. The old man was overcome with his feelings as he concluded. Gerold grasped his hand, and laying the other affectionately on his shoulder, said :

"I thank you, Kuno, for this tribute of love and respect, and you also, my good people."

He then looked into the eyes of his old servant, and continued :

"Since I was a child, I remember your kindly old face. You have been at my side for over forty years. My constant attendant as a boy, you followed my life in joy and sorrow,

in peace and war, and in this, my native city, as well as in the most remote corners of Europe. Your faithfulness, kindness of heart, and constant care of my comfort have merited not only my unchanging love, but have made the presentation of this token, not only a matter of justice, but a great privilege. Accept, my dear Kuno, with my heartfelt thanks, this purse for yourself, and distribute this one to my household servants."

Gerold handed a well filled purse of gold to Kuno and an equally large one to be divided among the servitors. He grasped the hand of each in turn as they filed up singly. He looked at them kindly and had a pleasant word for each of them. It was touching to see the genuine affection expressed by them in their own peculiar and extravagant way.

Madame von Ebertus noted keenly each action in the little domestic scene before her, and the evident sincerity displayed pleased her beyond expression. Her eyes glanced from her son to the group before him. His great happiness was manifested in every movement, in every word, and his bright laugh sounded above the babel of voices in the room. At her side were Egon and Anna, absorbed in the scene.

When Kuno and the servants departed, Gerold approached Madame von Ebertus.

"This, my dear mother, is the happiest day I have had in fifteen years. All that has been, all that has contributed to unhappiness in the past shall be forgotten in the new life which is to commence to-day. I am very happy mother, and peace has at last supplanted mental anguish and dreadful uncertainty."

"For many years, my son, have I prayed for this day, and besought the Most High for the return of this dear child. You have been sorely tried, my son, but in the long years of your wandering and cheerless existence you have been true to yourself and have merited the contentment which has at last spread over your soul and mind."

She walked close to her son and spread her hands over him in blessing, and continued :

"May God in his infinite mercy bless the union which you are about to contract, and give you peace and happiness henceforth."

All heads were bowed as the impressive words came from the fine old woman's lips and a deep hush of reverence followed.

"I thank you, my mother," replied Gerold after a pause.

"Come Egon, let us descend and see the preparations," broke in Anna, and a moment later they left the room.

Anna and Egon had formed the closest offensive and defensive alliance during the past months. They walked, rode, fenced, and studied together. They were constantly in each other's company and loved to talk about Von Dougal and his life at Rothweil. They speculated upon matters and reports which were brought to Ebertus's Thurm from the prefecture ; but when Anna had left Villingen to make a visit at Rothweil in company with Von Dougal's mother, Egon, though pressed to accompany them, steadfastly refused, and no amount of persuasion induced him to alter his decision.

Von Dougal was somewhat grieved at Egon's determined refusal and could not understand why the boy persisted in it. Driven into a corner at last by the persuasive manner of Von Dougal, ably backed by Madame von Dougal, he blurted out :

"Herr von Dougal, why should I return to Rothweil, even for a visit? There is nothing there that appeals to me. Nothing but bitter memories and sorrow are the recollections which come to me. When I think of the past year, it is enough to wish that such a place had never existed. I am happy here, and here I shall remain. I love you and Anna and Madame Von Dougal, and to please you all I would do much, but I will not do this, I cannot."

"Very well, my boy, I think I understand you," answered Von Dougal, as he looked intently at the boy ; "under the circumstances I will not press you further."

So Von Dougal had returned to Rothweil with his mother and Anna, and while Egon corresponded with them all regularly, he never wavered in his determination.

Anna and Egon inspected the decorations in the various rooms of Ebertus's Thurm and afterward walked through the main street of the city, finally stopping at the Minster to admire the elaborate decorations both inside and outside of the beautiful building. Then they returned to describe it all in detail to Madame von Ebertus.

The hour for the ceremony had come, and the square was packed with sightseers and troops. After some delay the magnificent pageant moved in procession through the city, and finally halted at the Minster. The religious exercises were carried out and, in the densely packed building, Breno made Gerold and Bertha man and wife. When the procession again left the building the enthusiasm knew no bounds. Thundering shouts and applause and salvos of musketry, to which the deeper boom of the guns on the walls lent an accompaniment, greeted Gerold and his bride. The lumbering carriage which conveyed them to Ebertus's Thurm was literally showered with flowers as they entered the great gate of the castle.

The festivities throughout the city commenced and in castle and cottage, alley, street, and common, the inhabitants of Viltingen feasted, danced, and sang from afternoon to evening, and far into the night. The soldiery, supplied with dozens of casks of wine, celebrated the event in their own way. The evening gun was the signal for the jollification, and with song and dance and noisy shouting the libations were continued, until the last drop of wine was extracted from the immense casks. Italian, Spaniard, and German vied with each other in properly celebrating the unusual and splendid event, and when the watchman plodded slowly and deliberately through the city, lantern and halberd in hand, announcing the flight of time, he called the hours and added :

"God bless our governor !"

CHAPTER XLV.

THE WATER SIEGE.

THE weeks of peace and quiet which the Uplands had experienced were ending. Large and small bodies of French and Swedish troops again coursed through the district, and several times in the month of August the allies had the hardihood to demand the surrender of the city, with forces scarcely in excess of the garrison within the walls of the fortress.

The invariable reply from the garrison was :

" Here is the city, come and take it."

These bodies ordered by Marshal Horn to appear before the city and demand its surrender, again departed to the eastward, after plundering, murdering, and burning in the surrounding hamlets and villages, and destroying such portions of the harvest as could be found. Domestic cattle were driven away, and the scenes of the year before were again repeated.

Refugees by the hundreds fled to the city for protection, and the officials were taxed to their utmost by the extraordinary demands made upon them for food and shelter. Large bodies of troopers issued from the walls to gather in the harvests which the enemy had either failed to discover, or had not had time to destroy, and in many such instances, sharp skirmishes resulted with varying success to both Imperialists and invaders.

Marshal Horn bore in mind the fearful losses previously in-

flicted upon the troops under his command, and let no opportunity escape to retaliate upon the stout-hearted inhabitants, and so inflict reprisals without specially delaying the more important work which confronted the invaders. He had fully determined, as soon as the campaign in which he was then occupied in eastern Bavaria was completed, to turn his attention to "that highly destructive nest," Villingen, after subjugating Ueberlingen and Rheinfeld in conjunction with the Duke of Würtemberg. Nothing but the threatening aspect of things in Bavaria, had prevented his taking immediate action for the final and complete destruction of that infamous "thorn in his side."

Rheingrave John Philip was besieging Rheinfeld, and the stout defence made by Colonel Mercy altered the plans against Villingen. Colonel Mercy sent couriers to Gerold and prayed for succor. Gerold knew that if that city should succumb, the whole force of the enemy would be directed upon Villingen. After much preparation, and not without misgivings at the weakening of his own forces, he fitted out an expedition of five hundred men, officered by two of his best men, and recruited from among the peasant refugees who had swarmed into Villingen.

Haller and Danni commanded the column, and received the most explicit instructions to avert all engagements and push into the forest and reach the beleaguered city without delay. A body of troops also left Freiburg and Breisach for this purpose, and a junction was planned at Donaueschingen. Before the troopers could reach the city, they were intercepted by the French under Colonel Gassion, with a superior force, and defeated with heavy loss. The few troopers under Haller and Danni led the green recruits with great bravery and fought stubbornly, but they were outnumbered ten to one and finally put to flight. Haller, who had scarcely recovered from the wound received in the Rothweil road under Thanner, received his death wound, and although Danni with splendid courage and mighty effort endeavored

to save his friend, he was obliged to abandon him and flee for his own safety. After many weary hours of retreat, the defeated men reached Villingen.

Rheinfeld was captured shortly afterward, and the besiegers who lay before Ueberlingen joined those of Rheingrave Philip, after putting the inhabitants of that unfortunate little fortress to the sword and blowing up the fortification.

Meanwhile, the son of the Emperor Ferdinand, with a great host, had taken the stubbornly defended city of Regensburg, and inflicted a defeat upon the Swedes and their allies at Donauwörth. He was with his victorious soldiers at Nördlingen, and made a junction with the Cardinal Infant Don Fernando who had a large force of Spaniards and Neapolitans under him. The success of the Imperialists prevented Marshal Horn from turning his attention to Villingen, as the Duke of Würtemberg was obliged to push forward every available man for the defence of Nördlingen.

The French Colonel Gassion, continued his successes, defeated the two bodies who were to join from Freiburg and Breisach, and moved northerly for the purpose of shutting out further assistance to Villingen.

Carolus, with a force of nearly one thousand men, took the field to intercept him, and thus gain time for moving into the city all the food, supplies, and provender which its overcrowded condition necessitated. Many sharp engagements resulted, but no material advantage accrued to either side. For nearly a week the daring troopers prevented the progress of the invaders. The tactics of Carolus were not understood by the French, as he attacked in small bodies; now from the north, and simultaneously from the south, with early morning attacks from the east, and continuous work from the west. Always in small bodies, they struck and destroyed, but avoided a general engagement.

Colonel Gassion was completely dumfounded by this method of warfare, and his troops were constantly under arms day and night. With his thousand men, Carolus

checked the advance of six thousand victorious and well-equipped men. He never sent out more than one hundred men in any body, and worked about half of his men while he kept the other half at rest. For nearly a week he kept a sleepless vigil, and directed with unflagging zeal and never-failing success, the sharp, quick movements of his riders.

When it was evident that he could no longer check the advance, he disappeared as suddenly as he had come, and weary, worn out in body, but determined as ever, he appeared under the walls of Villingen with his troopers.

Small bodies of riders skirted the neighborhood, and these, too, were finally driven in by the advancing Frenchmen. Again the drawbridges were lifted and the city was isolated from the outer world. The sentinels were doubled, and that night Gerold, with Rheinhold, Danni, and Gurdin made the rounds of the fortress to be certain of its condition. Explicit orders were given to the officers in charge of the gates to report all occurrences to headquarters forthwith. The glorious moon shed its silvery light and bathed the landscape in its soft effulgence. The myriads of stars shone brilliantly in the heavens, and the insects chirped noisily in the warm, pleasant night.

On the loftiest battlement of the St. Francis Tower, Gerold paced to and fro. For hours he continued his monotonous vigil, stopping every few minutes to scan the horizon to the south, or to listen intently to the sounds which came up from the sleeping city under him.

"This invasion may be the undoing of us all," he mused. "Gassion is an experienced and resourceful man, and of quite different calibre from the puppets who have led their sheep to slaughter before these walls."

He continued his paces and mused on :

"I wish Von Dougal were here too. Strange what a hold he has taken on me ! But perhaps it is best as it is. Rothweil will feel the hand of the returning invaders, and he is the best man to have at the post. Well, we shall see !"

To and fro he paced until the first gray streaks of dawn broke upon the eastern horizon. Then he descended, threw himself upon a cot, and fell into a deep slumber.

Robertus, who mounted the battlement soon after Gerold descended, remained for a considerable time, and kept his eyes on the now lighting panorama of plain and hill to the south. He remained steadily gazing, in an expectant and intensely anxious manner. A slowly moving speck at length showed on the road which led to Donaueschingen, and he leaned forward and scanned the object with suppressed excitement.

"Ha!" he ejaculated, after watching it for a few moments, "they are here! It cannot be otherwise!"

He descended quickly, and opened the door of the room in which Gerold lay sleeping. He looked at him for a moment, and then placing his hand upon his shoulder, shook the sleeping man gently.

"Sir Gerold! Sir Gerold! They are here. I saw the advance to the south, towards Donaueschingen! Awake Sir Gerold!"

Roused out of a deep slumber, Gerold sat in a half drowsy attitude, and gradually comprehended the fateful words of his subaltern officer. He recovered himself quickly, and together the two men ascended the stone steps which led to the battlement. They had just reached the landing as shuffling feet were heard below. In a few seconds, Lumbas appeared on the landing, and without waiting for either Gerold or Robertus to question him, moved quickly to the other side of the embrasure and pointing, said:

"There they are, Sir Gerold. I thought we discerned them from the wall below."

"Yes," answered Gerold, "Robertus discovered them a few moments ago."

After watching the moving mass for some moments, he turned to Robertus.

"You Robertus, go to Carolus and acquaint him with the

state of affairs. You Lumbas, call the troops to arms, and take your position."

Gerold remained on the lofty battlement and heard the deep roll of the drums and the clatter and noise of the arming garrison. Shortly after, Carolus appeared, and in the early dawn the two friends watched the sinuous lines of cavalry and infantry approach the city.

"I presume another demand will be made upon us before operations begin," said Gerold, with a slight smile, as he turned to Carolus.

"Oh, yes!" he answered. "The Frenchman never forgets the politeness which characterizes the nation. I did not wait to be introduced, however," he continued with a grim smile. "I simply saw and struck, and kept at it for several days. Do they intend to take the city with cavalry? Perhaps they attach wings to their steeds and fly the walls in Pegasus style."

Gerold smiled at the sally of his friend, but turned again to the columns which were now plainly discernible in the distance.

"Surely there is no artillery, Carolus; but perhaps it is to arrive later. See, there comes a small party in advance. Do you descend and ascertain what is wanted, although it is palpably a demand for surrender," commanded Sir Gerold.

Carolus descended and passed quickly to the St. John Gate, toward which entrance the small, mounted party was heading.

After some moments of suspense, a bugle call rang clearly in the morning air. A reply for parley was sounded in response, and the drawbridge was quickly lowered. An officer, well mounted and caparisoned, rode slowly across the moat, and saluting in the most polite manner, said:

"Colonel Gassion's compliments to the commandant, with the request that the gates be opened to him for the protection of the inhabitants and garrison. All freedom shall be extended to its burghers, both in civil and religious rights,

and unmolested departure to the garrison if this request is complied with at once."

Again the officer saluted, and awaited the reply which came instantly :

"The commandant's compliments to Colonel Gassion, but, as heretofore explained to Swedes, Scotch, Würtembergers, and Frenchmen, here is the city ; come and take it. *Au revoir, Monsieur.*"

Carolus politely saluted the French officer, and turned upon his heel. The drawbridge was again lifted, and the gates closed.

The calm and quiet of an August morning lay over hill, dale, and forest, and naught disturbed the serene beauty of the glorious summer morning. The lark soared high above the loftiest battlements, the sparrows chirped under the eaves, and the storks craned their necks at the top of the chimneys. The faint sounds from the quarters of the garrison rose to the tops of the tall towers, the muffled neigh of a horse, or the opening of a wooden shutter, was the only sound which broke upon the stillness.

On a road which led to the north, the columns of the invaders pressed steadily onward until the advance guard reached the ruined Warenburg. Gassion halted the troops, and then, like a great octopus, they spread about and nearly encircled the city. At the Hubenloch, the few pieces of artillery which they had with them were posted, and, in an hour's time, the third siege of Villingen was begun. The abandoned and dilapidated trenches which had been dug by Rau were again partly rehabilitated, but carefully restored at the Warenburg where Colonel Gassion made his headquarters. Preparations for an extended siege were made, but up to noon of the first day not a single hostile act was committed. Later in the day, a large train of provisions, which was intended for the inhabitants of Villingen, was captured, and the peasants who conveyed the lumbering carts were flogged and driven out of camp.

As the sun was setting, a large force of infantry, cavalry, and artillery joined the besiegers at Warenburg and took position on the south and east of the city. The investment was now complete, and as the moon rose over the eastern hills, bathing the undulating country with its silvery light, the twinkling camp-fires of the host around the walls of the city shone like innumerable glowworms in the distance.

All day the garrison watched the invaders, keenly apprehensive, but entirely inactive. Gerold, who passed the greater part of the day on the St. Francis Tower, was surprised at the movements of the besiegers, and although a portion of the besieging lines were within the range of the heaviest guns, he gave no orders to attack, but silently awaited a signal or effort on the part of the enemy. Carolus, Lumbas, and Gurdin were with him during the early hours of evening, and the four were in the midst of an animated discussion as Rheinhold joined them.

"I am totally at a loss to understand the inactivity of the enemy," said Gerold, as he greeted Rheinhold.

"I believe Rau and his Swedes and Würtembergers joined Gassion a short time ago," said Rheinhold.

"What makes you think that?" asked Gerold, as he quickly turned to Rheinhold.

"I do not know, but that is my impression, and I believe also, that his arrival explains the inactivity of the French troops during the day. Rau will not brook interference with his plans, nor allow anyone to take any credit when he is in the neighborhood. You will find that I am right," answered Rheinhold.

"I wonder if he took any credit for the successes of the last siege?" interposed Gurdin, with an expansive grin.

"If Rheinhold is right, he returns to justify himself, and will redouble his efforts to avenge the disasters which befell him under these walls," said Carolus.

"I hope Rau will take command; he is least to be feared.

Anyone rather than that cunning Frenchman, Gassion," replied Gerold, without answering Carolus's statement.

Together they watched the twinkling camp-fires which glimmered in unbroken lines around the city, behind which over eight thousand men formed a cordon that isolated Villingen from the outer world. Great activity reigned throughout the besiegers' lines during the night, and for hours the sentinels on the walls heard the commands and shouts of the invaders in the still night air.

Again the morning broke, and the second day of the siege began without special incident. As the morning light revealed the distant objects, the special activity of the southern and eastern portions of the valley were discernible.

The Brigach, in its downward course, flowed swiftly to the end of the depression between the two higher ridges of the lower valley. This naturally formed basin, at the higher point of which the walls of Villingen rose, suggested to the cunning Gassion, the plan by which he hoped to crush the city. Fire and sword, bombardment and assault, had failed to break the warlike spirit and unflinching courage of the defenders of the little fortress, and he therefore resolved upon a simpler and more effective plan to subjugate the stout-hearted Imperialists.

Leaving but a small portion of his troops in the various camps, he ordered every available man to the lower end of the valley and began the preparations for the destruction of the city. He knew full well that the artillery which was at his disposal was entirely inadequate for an effective bombardment, and he knew also that it was impossible to storm the city. Rau had given him his own impressions and advised against it, being in no mood to try conclusions again. The conference between Gassion, Rau, and their officers, was long, and at the end of the protracted session the plans were fully developed. That night, large detachments scoured in all directions for the necessary material, and by morning huge

piles of lumber and thousands of picks and shovels were brought into requisition. Peasants from all directions were pressed into service, and several thousand able-bodied men were busily engaged in the preliminary work of the unique operations.

Villingen was to be drowned out. A monster dam was to be erected between the two spurs which encircled Villingen to the south and formed a natural barrier for the purpose, the only outlet being the cut through which the Brigach flowed in its southern course towards Donaueschingen. Scarcely one hundred rods separated the two spurs, and this the two commanders resolved to close, with the help of their joint commands and the forced assistance of the peasants within a radius of five leagues. The swift flowing Brigach was depended upon to store up its waters and accumulate the destructive element to subdue the hapless and helpless defenders.

Carts of all descriptions were procured and great numbers of their own cavalry horses were pressed into service. Huge logs were sunk into holes dug for the butts and then quickly filled in. The work progressed with great rapidity, and at the end of the third day, the foundations and base of the dam were advanced almost to the edge of the Brigach. Great banks of earth were formed by the endless processions of wagons on both sides of the rocky bed of the swiftly flowing stream, and before the morning broke on the fourth day, the base of the dam was extended into the river; and while many a huge trunk broke from the control of the busy workmen and sailed majestically down the current of the stream, the work was pushed steadily onward.

The evident intent of the besiegers was understood by Gerold and his officers, and preparations were begun to neutralize or block the cunning design of the besiegers. A number of plans were suggested to thwart the enemy, and render their evident intention nugatory. Each in its turn was abandoned for good and sufficient reasons, and as the

first week of the siege ended, matters were practically as in the beginning, and nothing of importance had developed.

The dam was entirely beyond the range of the most powerful guns of the fortress. As the work progressed, the entire force of the besiegers was withdrawn from two points of the investment and strongly concentrated and fortified on the lower ends of the two spurs. Great trenches were dug, and all the guns placed in position to defend the approaches of the great wall of earth, which rose, foot by foot, and extended into the middle of the stream, leaving but a narrow sluiceway through which the pent-up waters rushed with accelerated speed and force.

To carry out their plans successfully, the enemy were obliged to construct a dam nearly forty feet in height, seventy feet in thickness, and nearly one hundred rods in length. The great reddish-brown mass now rose to a height of twenty feet, and the aperture through which the Brigach tumbled and tossed was ready to be blocked. Several huge rafts were constructed and floated down the stream. The first broke into pieces by the force of the impact as it struck the abutments of the earth wall and the solidly built base of logs. The second capsized and partly clogged the sluiceway, while the third raft floated into proper position, and finally held. Tons of rocks and hundreds of smaller logs were rolled into the breach, and the mass of obstructions was quickly filled in with brush, earth, and gravel. The base of the dam was completed, and the Brigach commenced to pile up its waters into a lake.

Inch by inch, foot by foot, the waters rose, backed up, and extended over the entire basin, and as the pressure of waters surged against the earth wall, the busy troopers and their unwilling but helpless peasant laborers, worked with increased energy to strengthen and extend the dam. Night and day, three or four divisions labored with incessant vigor and unrelenting effort. They were encouraged by their officers, who stood over them and directed the work with unflagging zeal.

Foraging parties scoured the country about Villingen, and many long trains of provisions and provender fell into the hands of the besiegers.

The withdrawal of the forces from the northern and western sections of the walls gave the garrison plenty of opportunity to harass and strike with more or less vigor and temerity. Sharp, fierce encounters between the venturesome riders of Villingen and the foraging parties of the besiegers were of daily occurrence, and Robertus, Gurdin and Danni, who led the troopers in their adventurous expeditions achieved great results in their various exploits.

With the exception of these annoying, and at times, destructive sorties, the invaders were subjected to no attacks from the garrison which seriously interfered with the strengthening and completion of the monster dam. Day after day passed, and foot by foot the accumulating waters encroached upon the gently sloping meadows. A vast lake was formed which extended over the shallow basin for nearly half a mile. Two hard rain-storms added largely to the water, and materially aided the work of the invaders.

Three weeks passed and the waters were approaching the moats. The whole basin to the south and east was filling up, and the city was in immediate danger of being cut off from all communication with the outer world. The south gate was practically under water, as the moat had mingled with the now rising waters of the Brigach, and was entering the city through the gates. The silent, relentless element was accomplishing that which the noisy, deafening, and more destructive force of arms had failed to do.

The danger to Villingen was daily increasing, and the burghers looked at one another in alarm, wondering what the result of this singular but fateful siege would be. From alarm, the inhabitants allowed their feeling to turn to excitement, and finally to despair, as the streets of the city were being slowly inundated with a smooth, even sheet of water, which filled all excavations below the level of the streets,

and commenced to undermine the weaker buildings in the southern portion of the city.

The success of the plan conceived by the French colonel seemed assured. It required only ten feet more of wall at the dam and the corresponding strengthening. The soldiers and peasants worked with increased zeal, and their efforts were stimulated by promises of rich plunder and liberal divisions of stores and wealth. The capitulation of the city was only a question of time, and the method adopted of bringing about its downfall was very much more satisfactory to both soldier and peasant, than to face the death-dealing missiles which had created such havoc in the past sieges.

Marshal Horn was apprised of the plans of Gassion and Rau, and when he heard the scope of the enterprise, he smiled incredulously and wrote :

"Very original and very plausible, but let me again caution you against the man at the head of affairs within that nest. He is brave and resourceful and will outwit you at the eleventh hour, unless you block him at all points. Do not depend altogether upon your arms and trenches, but be certain that you are not surprised and defeated by an attack from your "lake." That is the particular point I caution you against."

Later, when the heaped-up waters mingled with the moat and entered the city, and in but a week or two more would bring about a climax, Marshal Horn again wrote to Gassion and Rau, as follows :

"The surprising success of your unique plan is cause for congratulation. Unless something untoward happens, I expect soon to hear of the surrender of that dangerous and stubborn stronghold. I commend your decision not to make a demonstration against Rothweil until after the major fortress is in your hands."

A few days passed, when one morning as the besiegers were about to renew their operations an hour before dawn, a furious assault was made on both flanks of their lines. The two

spurs which converged at the dam contained the entire force of the besiegers, and the headquarters of the two commands were at either end of the great earthwork; Gassion at the east and Rau at the south. The great trenches which bristled with cannon were reinforced with running trenches in which the musketeers and heavy infantry were to operate.

The surprise of the enemy was complete when a terrible artillery fire was added to the assaults, and the destruction was fearful. The unexpected bombardment created a wild panic among the peasants and non-combatants, and in sheer fright they tumbled, rolled, and fell by hundreds down the slopes of the immense earthwall to the deep ravine which formerly had been the bed of the Brigach. The French and Swedish officers were too busily occupied in forming their men and preparing to resist the attack, to give any heed to the panic stricken peasantry. The opportunity to escape from the practical bondage to which they had been subjected during the past few weeks was too good to lose. The result was, that those of them who did not share the fearful alarm which overtook their countrymen, simulated it, and used the opportunity to depart, leaving their tools, horses, and carts in the trenches, and on the spurs and embankment.

The hurrahs of the foot folk under Rheinhold, Danni, and Aescher; and the incessant rattle of musketry, could be heard above the thunder of the artillery, which belched forth shot and shell from the very centre of the lake which had been created for the destruction of Villingen. Rheinhold and Aescher on the south spur led a determined body, and before the astonished and sleepy out-posts could gather themselves together, they were overpowered and put to the sword. The dismounted cavalrymen under Aescher, leaped the trenches and captured the first tier of guns without a shot. They were promptly spiked or turned upon the works in the next line of defence. The pikemen with terrific yells advanced upon a run and leaping over the second trenches, struck ferociously at the Swedes and Württembergers, who were packed in



"Fire into them and roll them over!" shouted Gurdin.

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behind the second tier of guns. A fearful hand-to-hand encounter followed, but, foot by foot, the sturdy pikemen advanced into the half-armed and badly frightened besiegers.

In the meantime, Gurdin with his cuirassiers, Ascanio and Robertus with the musketeers and dismounted lancers, forced the works on the opposite side of the great earthwall and brought death and destruction upon the surprised and hastily armed Frenchmen. The sounds of conflict were fearful. The deep curses of the officers, who tried in vain to bring about order, were lost in the terrible hail of exploding shells and the deafening shouts of the deep-chested and iron-clad-men who struck and hewed their way through whole lines of Frenchmen with terrible execution.

"Fire into them and roll them over," shouted Gurdin.

"Into the ravine!" he yelled, above the fearful noise and confusion. "Forward, now!"

He grasped the spokes of the heavy lumbering pieces after they were discharged, and with the strength of a giant, he pushed the gun to the slope down which it rolled and tumbled, a wreck, into the rocky cut below.

"Another, my men, so!" and so on until a dozen guns were pushed and rolled down the declivity. The heavier ones were quickly spiked, and again the burly form of Gurdin was seen in the very lead of the savagely fighting men.

The terrible fire from the guns, which broke from the darkness, was galling, and created immense loss upon the densely massed men who were posted upon the table-land. Nearer and nearer the furious fire seemed to come, and the incessant flash and thunder of the artillery was terrifying.

The whole force of besiegers was being pressed from three sides into a desperate and critical position. Gassion, who was astounded at the unexpected and well-planned attack, gradually comprehended the whole force of the plan. He looked furtively at the incessant flash upon the black and ruffled water, and a great light seemed to come to him.

"Ha!" he cried, "they have built rafts and mounted

artillery upon them. They are also under control and capable of being moved in any direction, even under our very noses—fool that I was for not anticipating this !”

He quickly ordered a number of guns to be directed at the spot from which the death-dealing missiles raked and tore though the camps, and soon a heavy fire was directed upon the floating batteries in the vast lake towards Villingen.

The attack upon the two flanks was continued and grew more terrific as the besiegers regained their confidence and recovered from the semi-panic into which they had lapsed.

CHAPTER XLVI.

THE DESTRUCTION OF THE ALLIES.

GEROLD and Carolus were seated in a stout bateau, peering into the darkness ahead of them. Besides the few men who handled the oars, two buglers who gave signals at Gerold's orders, were seated in it. At the rear of the boat, a rudely built affair was being towed by a long rope. It was neither a raft nor a bateau, and was evidently intended for buoyancy rather than appearance. A number of large casks were placed in the middle of the float, but no one was visible on the craft.

"Advance!" said Gerold quietly; and the bugle blast sounded in a lull of the guns. Twenty or twenty-five large floats, upon which one or more guns were mounted, moved forward and approached the great bank of earth to within five hundred yards, hurling their death-dealing messengers into the camps of the besiegers.

A flash was seen on the spurs, followed by another and, finally, a few more, and then a hail of shot splashed the water and tore and shrieked through the air above the heads of the slowly moving floats.

"At last!" said Gerold, as he noted the attack. He gave orders to move away from the direction of the guns, and when he had moved away sufficiently far to insure the safety of the craft which floated behind his boat, he halted again and watched the progress of the struggle which could be distinctly seen from the position he now occupied. The

two attacks were slowly but surely resulting in success to the Imperialists. The trenches were passed, and the guns disabled. Nearly eight thousand men were penned in between two determined bodies of men fighting for their lives, their homes, their country, and their God. It was over four to one ; but the great disparity in the forces was overcome by the superiority of the position and the advantage already gained.

The destruction of their guns had a dispiriting effect on the besiegers. They gave way before the savage and desperate attacks, and retreated slowly, fighting, foot by foot, to the centre of the two spurs where a few guns left them belched forth flashes in the night upon the advancing floats. The space between the two flanks, which had been dark and unoccupied, now flared up with musketry, showing that the foot folk under Rau were pressed back and occupied the great dam. A red light was hoisted on the extreme east of the spur, and in a second, the bugles again sounded in the night.

"There, Carolus, is the signal ! Rheinhold has gained the edge of the spur !" said Gerold, as he quickly rose to his feet.

"Give way," he said to the oarsmen, "and pull in that line."

A single blast floated out, and a boat noiselessly came alongside, manned by half a dozen men. One of the buglers scrambled into it, and Carolus after shaking Gerold by the hand, said quietly :

"Everything depends on me now. Good-bye, my friend, it is salvation or death."

Gerold grasped his hand in both of his, and said in a voice which betrayed anxiety and emotion :

"God be with you, my friend, and protect you in this hazardous enterprise."

The line was fastened to Carolus's boat after he entered it, and with a strong pull of the oars, it disappeared in the darkness, with the mysterious float towing behind it, in the

direction of the dam. The pressure of the attack on both sides of their lines jammed the besieging forces together, and as the press of soldiers grew heavier, the few guns which operated against the floating batteries stopped.

The water batteries had ceased their merciless work as the storming Imperialists crowded the invaders together, and at a signal from Gerold, again returned towards the city. Gerold remained with his boat, and with deep anxiety peered in the direction of the conflict which seemed to grow fiercer and fiercer. The cries of the combatants were clearly heard above the crash of musketry and the rattle of arms on the still and calm lake.

"A Gerold! A Gerold!" The war cry was heard, and it seemed to Gerold as if the powerful voice of Gurdin could be distinguished above the din.

Gerold ordered the boat nearer the line of battle as the guns on the dam ceased their fire. A hundred yards nearer, and yet a hundred yards, towards the dark space which formed the new earthwork, and which threatened the life, liberties, and existence of the fine old fortress.

Another red light flashed in the darkness at the other end of the spur, and two red lights now glowed brilliantly in the night.

"Ha! Again successful, brave men! I wonder if Carolus sees the signal. He must be there now," mused Gerold, as he peered with anxiety and expectation into the dark streak between the two spurs. He ordered the boat yet nearer, and another hundred yards were measured when he again gave the order to cease rowing.

Fires were started by the Swedes to light the surrounding table-land or spur, and in the red flare, the desperately fighting men could be clearly distinguished. Higher and higher mounted the flames, upon which were thrown carts, shovels, picks, and every available article which was likely to burn. In the dim light Gerold could see the boat and float moored alongside of the centre of the dam.

Carolus and his men worked with a desperate will, and succeeded in reaching the great wall of earth unnoticed. It required but a few moments to fasten the ends of the float to some spiles which were driven in to form a sluiceway a few feet above the edge of the water. Quickly grasping two small casks, they were shoved up the slight incline, pushed across the entire bank and finally rolled over the ravine below.

"Quick, men! Your life depends on it!"

Carolus stood on the edge of the embankment, and noted the efforts of the quicksilver as it burrowed and crumbled the earth in two gullies through which the water followed with increasing volume.

"To the boat, quick!" he said, with suppressed excitement, as a number of dark forms came towards them. Carolus threw himself flat upon the bank close to the edge of the raft, upon which a dozen or more huge casks were loaded. Two of the men rolled down the incline and into the lake close to the boat, into which they quickly clambered. The other slid down head first, and lay perfectly quiet alongside of Carolus. The fourth crawled behind two large logs on the top of the embankment, and the entire party escaped notice. Group after group, and detachment after detachment, hurried across the top of the embankment within a rod or two of the crouching men.

"What is this?" said a deep voice, as a large detachment passed above. Pulling up his horse the officer dismounted, and personally examined the obstruction which was clearly discernible in the dim light.

"The dam is leaking! Look, Christian! What has caused this? Great heavens, it is giving way.

The officer jumped upon his horse and a stampede followed back in the direction from which they came.

Carolus gave a chuckle of satisfaction, jumped quickly to his feet, and ordered the boat away a few rods from the place of danger. Alone he approached the float and fumbled

about for a second or two. Then reaching into his waistcoat he drew forth a flint and steel. As he was about to strike, a dark figure slid down the bank and stood beside him. Alarmed, he grasped the hilt of his short sword, as he keenly eyed the stranger.

"What do you want? Quick or you are a dead man!"

"It is I, Herr Carolus, Egon!"

"Great heavens, my boy, what are you doing here?"

"I was one of the rowers in the small boat. Let me help you Herr Carolus!"

Amazed at the fearlessness of the youth, Carolus looked at him with mingled feelings of admiration and alarm for his safety.

"Good," he answered, "hold the fuse and spread the end quickly."

"A blow or two and the spark reached the carefully prepared combustible tube a rod long, and it sputtered and flashed as it consumed its way to the casks upon the huge float.

"Fly my boy, to the boat!" said Carolus, as he ran to the craft which was moored a rod or two away. Together they ran, stumbled and fell into the boat. Then began a pull for life along the base of the embankment and towards the southern spur of the besiegers' lines.

Carolus kept his eyes riveted on the sputtering fuse and mentally calculated the time it would take to reach the casks. One, two, three minutes, passed and the frantic rowers strained every muscle to place distance between them and the fearful mine which lay before them in the shadow of the wall of earth.

"Away my men! On the left oars now!" said Carolus, without taking his eyes off the spot where the spark was still clearly discernible.

"Move to the left!" he shouted, as they reached the rear of the struggling masses on the edge of the dam. Another boat now came into sight and a voice called with anxiety—

"Carolus!"

"Here, Sir Gerold, but pull for your life!"

"Away! Away! my men."

Together they pulled, and had nearly reached the natural shore, or original rise, of the southern spur, when a slight flash shot into the air, then another, almost simultaneously followed by an explosion which seemed to rend the heavens and earth asunder. The blinding flash and shock passed, and a huge wave rushed across the dark waters.

"The shore! The shore!" yelled Carolus as he looked upon the crested giant rolling up to them. A stroke or two, and the boat grated upon the grassy side of the artificial lake.

Gerold's boat being heavier, and not so easily handled, was caught upon the crest of the wave and dashed upon the slope of the spur from which three or four men rolled, half-stunned into the water.

The fearful explosion rent the loose earth, tore great gaps in the soft substance of the embankment, into which immense volumes of water poured, turned, twisted, and eddied with irresistible force, as it burrowed and rushed into the seams opened by the quicksilver. The pressure of the pent-up back waters was terrific, and as the immense wave backed up in its force, huge masses of earth slid into the lake and broke into innumerable portions. Again the rocking waters returned to the dam, and the whole immense wall trembled and churned as if in a convulsive effort to retain its strength and resist the powerful pressure of the millions of tons of water stored up during the past few weeks. For several seconds it rocked and swayed, and then with a final shock or two, a tremendous cataclysm took place. In great sections, the numerous masses of earth crumbled before the deluge of water, which pressed, tore, upheaved, and swept with mighty force and thundering roar into the boiling ravine below. A mighty cataract poured for a few seconds through the central break, and with a report as of a thousand guns, the entire balance of the walls fell and buried with the mingled earth, water, and logs, thousands of the besiegers who were pressed back

upon the great mound of earth, by the desperately fighting forces under Rheinhold, Gurdin, Aescher, Ascanio, and Robertus. Amid the awful roar and fearful confusion of the upheaval, the stifled and agonized cries of men rose in horrid accompaniment.

Camp equipage, tents, wagons, horses, men, and guns were churned into a shapeless mass beneath the sliding, crunching and rocking masses of earth and water and hurled down into the swirling vortex. The rush and roar of the waters which followed was awful. The vast lake seemed to dip with a sharp incline and slide with fearful velocity into the great yawning hole of over one hundred rods. The earth trembled under the shock of the falling water.

The besiegers who were fighting on the solid ground, ceased, appalled at the terrible catastrophe which had overtaken their comrades. The storming parties under Gurdin and Rheinhold who were desperately holding the positions which they had gained, were no less amazed at the awful development of their plans. They stood as if rooted to the ground, and wondered if the spur upon which they stood would give way also. A panic seemed evident, as they quickly pressed back upon the rear ranks and looked with frightened faces upon the sliding and roaring lake.

Gurdin, who stood in the front ranks, ordered a retreat but the blare of the bugles was lost in the thunder of the waters. Irresolute before the mighty force of nature, friend and foe stood with blanched faces. Their nerveless hands clutched their weapons as they stood trembling in the face of the calamity, gazing at the frightful abyss which yawned before them. Their terror gradually abated, and Gurdin soon recovered his self-possession.

"Surrender!" he shouted at the top of his voice, to the closely huddled ranks of survivors. His command was scarcely needed, for the officers who pressed to the front, raised the hilts of their sabres and rapiers in token of submission. Pikes, lances, and the butts of muskets quickly

followed, and in the early light of the dawn about five hundred men on the south side of the spur laid down their weapons and were marched to the walls of Villingen.

Rheinhold and Aescher and their commands were fighting and holding their positions gained during the first quick assault, and were farther away from the dam. Many hundreds of the French and Würtembergers were engulfed on this side, and while the survivors were terror stricken at the suddenness of the blow, they recovered with wonderful rapidity and recommenced the desperate hand-to-hand-conflict. It was in vain, however. After a few minutes of unequal effort they were summoned to surrender, and they too raised their arms in token of submission.

They were hurried in the opposite direction, and the two forces were brought to one large camp at the Warenburg, where they were closely guarded. Of the thousands of besiegers who had brought the city to the depths of despair, scarcely twelve hundred men survived. Both Gassion and Rau met their deaths in the grave they had dug for the inhabitants of Villingen.

Gerold, Carolus, Egon, and their men, who had so narrowly escaped death on the shelving waters, joined Gurdin's command as he passed them on the return to Villingen. The floats, rafts, and bateaux had barely reached the moat when the explosion took place. The sharp current which ensued almost immediately thereafter, taxed the efforts of Lumbas and his men to the utmost to prevent the floating craft from breaking the stout moorings to which they were fastened.

The entry into the northern gate of Gerold, Carolus, and the forces was the signal for tumultuous joy. Deafening cheers echoed through the streets and alleys, and men, women and children wept with joy as the full deliverance from their peril was manifested. The Minster bells rang in joyful acclaim, and when the sun rose in its glory over the distant tops of the pine forest, special services were held in

the Minster, church, and homestead for the miraculous escape of the city and its inhabitants from the destruction which had seemed inevitable but a few hours before.

Ebertus's Thurm was the centre of observation, and a great crowd congregated on the principal square of the city. Laughing, happy knots of men, women, and children mingled with the soldiers, who rehearsed the thrilling experiences of the early morning hours on the spurs of the Brigach valley. Gerold was obliged to show himself repeatedly, during the morning, to the gathering, enthusiastic crowds, and each time he appeared on the great stone balcony, it was the signal for deafening cheers. But when, during the afternoon, Gerold, Bertha, Madame von Ebertus, and Egon together stepped upon the upper balcony to look at the great crowds in the square below, the enthusiasm knew no bounds. The people shouted themselves hoarse, while the deafening yell of the soldiers punctuated the thundering acclaim with the well-known war cry :

"A Gerold ! A Carolus !"

The happy day of deliverance, which ended the sixth siege of the city of Villingen during the seventeen years of the war, was fittingly closed by a special salute of the great guns on the walls of the fortress.

Couriers were sent to Rothweil, and the glad tidings roused the loyal heart of Wilhelm von Dougal to the highest degree of happiness. The death of the Swedish Colonel, Rau, who for years had visited untold hardships, and inflicted the most brutal atrocities, upon the loyal defenders of the faith in south-western Germany, was hailed with every manifestation of joy and satisfaction in the minor fortress of Rothweil.

After the affairs of Villingen had again resumed their normal condition, couriers arrived and announced the practical destruction of the Swedish armies and their allies at Nördlingen, the direct result of which freed southern and western Germany from the thralldom of the invasion, and

forced Marshal Horn and Duke Eberhardt of Würtemberg, as well as the minor lights of the Protestant League, into France and northern Germany.

The destruction of the proud army which had faced the Imperialists at Nördlingen brought months of peace to the uplands, and, despite the weak and spasmodic efforts of the French to regain their lost prestige, but little was accomplished by the allies in the fertile but war-ridden district between the Rhine and eastern Tyrol.

Werner von Klutus, torn by grief and remorse, followed the fortunes of those with whom he had bargained his soul and his manhood. He lived a few years with varying fortune, harrowed by a guilty conscience, and despised by those who had profited by his evil and wicked act. He died in obscurity and neglect, and while he honestly regretted his lapses of honor when in the heyday of his power, the bitterness of his disappointments and the forced retirement from active life, neutralized the good intentions which rose in his rebellious and violent nature.

Huldah lingered for many days between life and death in the ward of the prison of Rothweil. After a lapse of months, she was duly tried before the civil authorities, and, during a sensational trial in which the miserable part which she had played in the betrayal of the city was fully exposed, she was sentenced to a long term of imprisonment. The low and sordid nature of the woman led her to a series of insubordinations, and on one occasion her plans resulted in the escape of a few of her accomplices. She was apprehended and kept in solitary confinement for weeks, after which she made life a burden to the prison officials. She died as she had lived,—an outlaw, defying the law and denying her God. Her death was violent and horrible. With both hands and feet manacled, she hurled her chains about her and threatened to crush the life out of her attendants. In the ravings which lasted several days, she did great bodily harm to herself. Finally, weak, exhausted, but glaring like

a wolf at bay, she expired, uttering fearful curses, and hurling the foulest maledictions upon those around her, who were endeavoring to alleviate her sufferings.

Carolus again journeyed to Rothweil in the spring of the year, when the perfume-laden breezes of the southlands wafted their incense upon budding nature, and transformed the long and rigorous winter into the joyful season when the heart throbs with rapture, and the world takes on anew the lovely mantle of freshness and beauty. Gerold and his wife, with Anna, Madame von Ebertus, and Egon accompanied him, and the occasion of the first visit of the Governor of Rothweil, together with the impending nuptial festivities, made a gala week for the lusty burghers of that stout little fortress.

Carolus and Von Dougal were about to enter upon a new life, for the feverish preparations at the prefecture were not only in honor of the visit of Gerold to the minor city in the jurisdiction, but of the double wedding of Carolus to Amalia, and Von Dougal to Anna. The great ceremony at the cathedral was finished, and amid the throngs at the festivities at the prefecture, were three elderly women who looked on the happy people with varying feelings. They were Madame von Klutus, Madame von Ebertus, and Madame von Dougal. A few hours later, Madame von Westphal joined them, and in the little circle which gathered in a quiet corner of the great banqueting hall, a drama of life was represented by the four mothers. Two of them were supremely happy; the third, Madame von Klutus, was sad, gentle, and quiet, with the conflicting feelings of hope, uncertainty, and despair ever gnawing at her heart-strings. The fourth was patient and resigned to the untimely and terrible death of her son, Hugo, and sustained only by the memory of her great love for him.

After a week of rejoicing, feasting, and happiness, the distinguished party returned to Villingen. Carolus occupied the old home of his forefathers and for many years took an

active interest in the welfare and administration of the district. He took the field in the events of the closing years of the "Thirty-years' war" and returned, covered with honors, to settle down to the less stirring, but equally important, work of rebuilding the broken fortunes of his Fatherland.

Gerold administered the district with consummate skill, and from the weakened and divided sections under its jurisdiction he builded a powerful and united community, loyal to His Majesty, the German Emperor. To his diplomatic, as well as military skill, was attributable the complete cessation of hostilities in the pine-clad uplands of Baden. The power of Villingen was increased by his just and wise administration, and it developed in importance and wealth. The spiritual rights of its inhabitants were respected, and, during the next thirteen years, in which the passions of men sank to the lowest depths of brutality and fanaticism, increasing the horrors of the religious war with which the hapless Fatherland had been visited, he stood like a rock for equality of rights, an arbiter between the conflicting and discordant elements about him.

Breno, alive to the advantage to be gained by a complete solidarity, attempted to frustrate the evident intentions of Gerold and, in a mild way, to neutralize the growing tendencies to the reformed faith. But Gerold calmly and judiciously pointed out to him the inevitable progress of events, and succeeded in demonstrating the wisdom of his course. The result amply justified the innovation, and the peace and prosperity of the city and its dependencies supplied the living proof of his broad-minded and able administration. He exacted loyalty to country and a cheerful contribution to the welfare of its people; and while at times he punished with harshness, and demanded strict adherence to the laws under which they all lived, his honesty of purpose was never assailed, and his integrity never questioned.

Bertha and Egon joined in the love they bore to the hus-

band and father, and ably seconded his efforts to wrest his district from the depths of unhappiness and woe which two decades of war had inflicted. Lovingly the wife stood by the side of the husband whom she idolized, and nobly the son emulated the shining example of the father. Respected for his character, admired for his qualities as a leader and a soldier, and loved for the tenderness which was inherent in his nature, Egon grew to manhood and usefulness, a worthy son and successor to the long and illustrious line of ancestors.

Thus with advancing age, enjoying the honor, respect, and confidence of his townsmen, did the stormy, eventful, and unhappy life of Gerold develop into happiness and peace. Neither malice, slander, nor the deeply planned treachery of those about him, had detracted in the slightest from the steady purpose of this remarkable man. Assailed in his home, discredited with his sovereign, and desperately attacked by the envious cabal that barked at his heels, he rose superior to the galling circumstances, and his greatness of soul expanded in beauty and gained strength from the very meanness of those about him. Manliness was inherent in him, considerateness was with him a creed, while forgiveness was an exalted virtue which he cherished and nurtured in his inmost soul. Added to these attributes, Gerold possessed unflinching courage, indomitable will, great executive ability, and wide knowledge of men and affairs. It is small wonder, therefore, that at the zenith of his power he was again summoned to Vienna and offered a most flattering post at the side of his sovereign.

He was received with pomp and circumstance at the capital city of the empire, and every attention was bestowed upon him. He was the object of special solicitude on the part of those attached to the court. The fawning and extravagant attentions by the courtiers were noted with keen relish by the observant man, and the thoughts which passed through his mind as he recalled the sneering, disdainful, and brutal manner of those sycophants, scarcely three years before, brought

a contemptuous smile to his lips, and a scornful expression to his eyes.

He knew the hollow mockery of his surroundings, and he realized what a will-o'-the-wisp was their favor and condescension. Strong in the power which he had wrung from an unwilling sovereign and his lickspittle courtiers, he scorned the blandishments which they attempted to heap upon him in his hour of triumph. Gerold declined to accept the post at Vienna, and firmly resisted all the pressure brought to bear upon him by the powerful yet vacillating forces that surrounded the throne. He preferred the society of the hearty, healthy men of the uplands, who flourished in the sunshine of honesty and on the ozone of the pine-clad forest, to that of the covert, dishonest, and enervated parasites, who thrived on intrigue and scandal in the stifling atmosphere of opportunity and corruption near the throne.

Gerold returned to the lovely hills and resumed his labors among the people who loved him for his qualities of head and heart, and admired him for his courage and his deeds of valor. He was always ready to extend a kindness or reward a brave act, and his life was the personification of the principles which were rooted deep in his heart, and which stamped him the exemplary son of an ancient and honorable house in an unparalleled and portentous time in the affairs of the Fatherland.

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